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FIFTY YEARS ON THE FRINGE: MURRAY BOOKCHIN AND THE AMERICAN  
REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION 1921-1971

By

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Bachelors of Arts, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2009

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Fifty Years on the Fringe: Murray Bookchin and the American Revolutionary Tradition 1921-1971

Chairperson: Dr. Michael Mayer

Murray Bookchin was an American revolutionary and political theorist born in New York City in 1921. His career as both an activist and a theorist through the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties, made him an active participant and influential voice for both the American Old Left, and the New Left. Writing for *Contemporary Issues*, a left wing journal edited by Josef Weber, Bookchin became an important part of the schismatic Left, a loose conglomeration of Marxist and Materialists who were both anti-Liberal and anti-Soviet. Bookchin worked with Weber until the latter's death in 1959. The two men formed a powerful intellectual and personal relationship that influenced Bookchin's career well into the 1960s. After Weber's death, Bookchin became a controversial and eclectic anarchist theorist. He developed Social Ecology, a comprehensive critique of advanced industrial capitalism that fused classical Anarchism with Neo-Marxist theory and British ecological theory. By the 1970s, Social Ecology had evolved into a standalone school of thought that became a guiding influence for the American Environmental Movement and bioregionalism.

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## Introduction

Nine years after the United States pulled the last of its ground troops out of Vietnam, Murray Bookchin released a brief memoir of his career as an American radical. Ideologically flexible and argumentative, perhaps to a fault, Bookchin, throughout the unique course of his life, crossed paths with a wide swath of American political culture's left wing fringe. As a teenager in New York City during the 1930s, Murray Bookchin began a long intellectual romance with the theoretical contributions of Leon Trotsky. Bookchin was an active member of the American Communist Party on the Lower Eastside of Manhattan until he was dismissed for "Trotsky Deviationism" after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. He remained active, however, in labor organizing well into the 1940s, first as foundryman in Newark, New Jersey, and then as a member of the UAW and CIO in Detroit, Michigan. After the General Motors strike of 1945-1946, Bookchin left the CIO. He returned to New York City, deeply resentful of Walter Reuther, the newly-elected president of the UAW. In Bookchin's opinion, Reuther sold American industrial labor down the river. By trading in the goal of achieving industrial democracy for personal gain, Bookchin believed, Reuther represented all that was wrong with the American labor movement. Back in New York, Bookchin fell in with a group of other disillusioned communists. There he met the man who changed the course of his life, chairman of the German Communist Party in exile, Josef Weber.

Under Weber's tutelage, Murray Bookchin launched a career as a self-styled intellectual and political theorist. Writing for *Dinge der Zeit*, a quarterly periodical edited by Weber, Bookchin analyzed the consequences that the new realities of the Cold War and the United States' newfound status as an economic superpower held for American revolutionaries. Weber helped Bookchin push beyond an orthodox Marxist-Leninist political outlook. The two men,

frequently critiquing one another's work, toiled together to produce a new radical ideology and propose a viable political and economic alternative to capitalism in the United States.

Josef Weber died before such a project could ever be completed. Bookchin, however, made it his own and proposed a new revolutionary alternative to American capitalism, Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Bookchin published his proposal in a series of essays throughout the 1960s, which were later collected and republished together as a book, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, in 1971. Beginning with "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," (1964) Bookchin argued for the reorganization of American society based upon a decentralized regional model. Economically and ecologically diverse communities, Bookchin posited, would each encompass a single bioregion or ecosystem. This "ecological society" that Bookchin envisioned would develop diverse forms of energy and production tailored to suit the resources found readily available in the community's immediate vicinity. Communities would employ directly democratic methods to direct policy and production. Local economic policy would ensure that the basic material needs of all were met, while preventing waste and over extraction. Above all, Bookchin argued, an "ecological society" would be a rational society, one that governed itself by way of logic and reason rather than ideology.

The lasting influence of Josef Weber and *Dinge der Zeit* on Murray Bookchin simply cannot be denied. Post-Scarcity Anarchism preserved and enriched the ideas of Josef Weber and many of Weber's most critical ideas found a place in Bookchin's model. Weber's work guided Bookchin's in the sense that Weber posed the practical theoretical problems for which Bookchin later found answers. In "The Great Utopia" (1950), Josef Weber declared that the dialectical progress of capitalism in Western Europe and the United States had reached a level a technological advancement wherein "all forms of hierarchy, as they exist, could be dissolved into

communal ownership of the means of production.”<sup>1</sup> Critiquing Karl Marx from the left, Weber argued that the historical role of the dictatorship of the proletariat was to serve as a means of transference from capitalism to pure communism. During the period of proletarian rule, Weber posited, Marx believed that a “technology of abundance” would be created, alleviating the problem of “want and work” and thus negating the need for all forms of hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> The realization of a technological potential for abundance, Weber held, had already been produced in the United States. This negated the historical role of the proletarian dictatorship and altered the revolutionary goal. A new utopian movement, Weber argued, needed immediately to seek the creation of a classless, anti-authoritarian, and anti-hierarchical society.

Bookchin spent the next two decades developing a new utopian outlook that dispensed with traditional categories of Marxian analysis, specifically the vanguard role of the Party and the revolutionary role of the proletariat. Post-Scarcity Anarchism was steeped in the intellectual tradition of Weber and *Dinge der Zeit*. Like Weber, Bookchin’s outlook was both anti-capitalist and anti-Bolshevik. Like Weber, Bookchin possessed a deep affinity for science and technology. Both men were committed Hegelians who possessed a defiant reluctance to accept the role of random chance in history. For both men, science offered a rational and linear explanation of the natural world that best fit with their linear interpretations of human progress. The similarities between Bookchin and Weber, and the power of their personal relationship, run so deep that neither thinker can be evaluated adequately in isolation.

On the other hand, Bookchin always tended to evaluate the 1960s against the backdrop of another radical decade, the 1930s. Apart from the problems contained within the theoretical corpus of revolutionary Marxism, Bookchin believed that there were other lessons that radicals

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), “The Great Utopia,” *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (New York: 1950), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-22.

of the 1960s could learn from the 1930s. The failure by the American Communist Party to achieve a wide base of support in the United States, Bookchin believed, was primarily the result of a failure by American communists to weave Marxism into an indigenous populist agenda. Rather, revolutionary Marxism, Bookchin held, was imported to American shores by the Eastern and Southern European immigrants who filled the ranks of the United States' industrial labor force in the early twentieth century. They published their thoughts and manifestos in their native tongues rather than English. For the majority of Americans, revolutionary Marxism remained an alien ideology. The dictatorship of the proletariat possessed no clear link with the United States' own political and intellectual tradition that lionized republicanism and demonized despotism.

Therefore, Bookchin became consummately preoccupied with the notion that a viable form of American radicalism would have to be indigenously produced in order to have a popular appeal. This new form of American radicalism would have to possess a clear link to the antiauthoritarian components of the American political and intellectual tradition. Bookchin crafted Post-Scarcity Anarchism to be a political alternative that was anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-imperialist without being anti-American.

Bookchin celebrated the creation of the Students for a Democratic Society, the *Port Huron Statement*, and participatory democracy. He firmly held that SDS's manifesto, the *Post Huron Statement*, represented a populist American agenda that was also compatible with his own outlook. By the late 1960s, however, Bookchin became greatly disheartened by the growing influence of Progressive Labor within SDS's ranks and the emergence of the Weather Underground. Bookchin bemoaned the fact that a movement that began with such great promise ultimately isolated itself from mainstream American society by reverting to the same old slogans of the 1930s: the class line, the vanguard party, and the proletarian dictatorship. By celebrating



Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, and Ho Chi Minh, a large portion of the New Left turned into a guilt-ridden anti-American charade rather than a serious antiauthoritarian movement.

In 1974, Bookchin and Daniel Chodorkoff, a former member of the New Left, co-founded the Institute for Social Ecology on Goddard College's campus in rural Vermont. The institute, which operates down to the present, has served as a think tank where the intellectual traditions and values of *Dinge der Zeit* and the New Left have been preserved. Murray Bookchin himself, who died in 2006, served as an intellectual link between the Old Marxist Left and the New Left. His writings contained both the accumulated knowledge of a lifetime spent in pursuit of utopian society and an intimate understanding of the history and development of left wing radical culture in the United States.

In the course of undertaking this project, I have racked up a debt of thanks to a number of individuals who deserve recognition. First I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Michael Mayer, who has been the guiding hand in this project since the beginning. His insights on Postwar America, cultural history, the New Left, the historiography surrounding the topics have been invaluable in this process. I would like to thank Dr. Dan Flores who guided my research and first introduced me to the primary historical figure of this project. I would like to thank Dr. Peter Staudenmaier, a social ecologist who studied under Murray Bookchin in Vermont at the Institute of Social Ecology. His insights on Bookchin as a person, a scholar, and a committed revolutionary have greatly shaped the direction of this project. Finally, I would like to thank Janet Biehl, Murray Bookchin's primary biographer and partner for the final twenty years of his life. Her tireless efforts to compile and archive Murray Bookchin's extensive bibliography, with articles dating from 1948 to 2005, made this project possible.

## Chapter 1

### The Old Left and the Origins of Social Ecology (1921-1959)

Murray Bookchin was born January 14, 1921, in New York City.<sup>3</sup> His parents, Nathan and Rose Bookchin, were Russian immigrants and radicals who had been active during the waning days of Tsarist Russia.<sup>4</sup> The circumstances of their arrival in the United States are murky, as was the nature of their involvement with the Bolshevik Revolution. What can be said without doubt, however, was that Bookchin's parents were refugees from the Russian Civil War, and deeply responsible for their son's immersion in the revolutionary Marxist tradition. Apart from his parents, the environment in which he was raised served as one of young Murray's earliest influences.<sup>5</sup> Even as a child, Murray quickly became fluent and fluid in the revolutionary politics and radical culture that permeated the ethnic neighborhoods of Depression Era New York.

In 1930, at the age of 9, Bookchin joined the Young Pioneers.<sup>6</sup> The principle youth club of the Communist Party exported worldwide from Russia by the Comintern, the Young Pioneers served as a veritable "Boy Scouts for Communists" organization. The Young Pioneers recruited prepubescent boys and girls from "politically correct families" – that is, they recruited the children of staunchly and properly Communist parents – in order to indoctrinate them as the successors to the Party's revolutionary vanguard.<sup>7</sup> Bookchin later transferred to the Young Communist League, a front for the American Communist Party that openly tackled civil rights

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<sup>3</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (London: Cassell, 1997), ix.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>5</sup> Murray Bookchin never fully disclosed the circumstances of his parents arrival in the United States, or their activities in Russia to his partner and confidant of twenty years, Janet Biehl. Janet Biehl, "A Short Biography of Murray Bookchin," *The Anarchy Archives: An Online Murray Bookchin Source* ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST\\_ARCHIVES/bookchin/bio1.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST_ARCHIVES/bookchin/bio1.html)), updated 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> A fairly concise history of the Young Pioneers and its organizational goals and purpose is provided by Jim Riordan, "Soviet Youth: Pioneers of Change," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XL, No. 4 (October, 1988), 562-577.

issues, such as lynching, and lobbied for youth labor restrictions, while also clandestinely seeking recruitment and circulating Communist literature and propaganda.<sup>8</sup> By the time Bookchin became a teenager, he had risen to the role of education director for his New York City office of the YCL.<sup>9</sup>

At the core of Bookchin's ideological training were the writings of Karl Marx. Bookchin never completely rejected Marx, and in fact he would often defer to the nineteenth century author in his own criticisms and thoughts. According to Janet Biehl, Bookchin's principle biographer, Bookchin kept a copy of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* close at hand until his dying day in 2006.<sup>10</sup> Bookchin often turned to Marx, reading him at odd hours of the day or when reflecting about his own work. It was his deep commitment to an orthodox interpretation of Marx, however, that fostered his growing dissatisfaction with international Communism and his uneasiness regarding Stalinism.<sup>11</sup>

Bookchin also turned to other sources of intellectual inspiration, augmenting his understanding of Marx with the theoretical ideas of Evolutionary Socialism proposed by Eduard Bernstein, an early twentieth century German social philosopher.<sup>12</sup> Bernstein argued against the necessity of violent revolution in order to remove the capitalist status quo and usher in a new order that would build toward socialism. Rather, Bernstein argued that humankind would eventually "outgrow" its overly competitive and imperialistic instincts and evolve toward socialism. Apart from Bernstein, Bookchin familiarized himself with the Left Opposition to

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<sup>8</sup> Biehl, "A Short Biography," 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>10</sup> Janet Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality – A Reply to Marcel Van der Linden," *Communalism*, April 2008 (accessed online: [http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2](http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2)).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Murray Bookchin, ed. Janet Biehl, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (London: Cassell, 1997), 1-18. Originally Published in *Comment* in 1964.

Stalin, and became particularly enamored with the writings of Leon Trotsky and his ideas of Permanent Revolution, which argued for a multiclass united front and also maintained the necessity of a global socialist revolution as opposed to Stalin's idea of "socialism in one country."<sup>13</sup>

Bookchin also formed a loose affiliation with Lovestoneite circles active in New York City in the 1930s. The Lovestoneites had split with the CPUSA in 1929. Their leader, Jay Lovestone, from whom this strain of American radicalism derived its name, had led his followers out of the party over a debate concerning the application of Marxist-Leninism to the American context. Lovestone argued that capitalism was so culturally entrenched in the United States that the CPUSA would have to pursue non-revolutionary policies.<sup>14</sup> Lovestone's feud with the Comintern, however, was also fueled by personal ambition and animosity. By the time that Stalin personally took control of the Comintern and expelled the organization's director, Nikolay Bukharin, from the politburo, Lovestone had assumed leadership of the CPUSA. In order to expel Bukharin, Stalin concocted a scandal, accusing Bukharin of consolidating his supporters, including Lovestone, to oppose Stalin's leadership of the Party.<sup>15</sup> In the United States, Stalinists within the CPUSA used the Bukharin scandal in an effort to supplant Lovestone. Lovestone caught wind of the coup against him through Bertram Wolfe, a CPUSA contact in Moscow, who warned him that Stalin had accused Lovestone of "factional intrigue" and informed his American supporters regarding Lovestone that Russians "knew how to handle trouble makers" and "there was plenty of room in [Russian] cemeteries."<sup>16</sup> After being asked to step down, and sensing that

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<sup>13</sup> Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, x.

<sup>14</sup> Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone, Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spy Master* (New York: Random House, 1996), 27-42.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 107.

he was in danger, Lovestone preemptively led his followers out of the CPUSA and joined Trotsky's Left Opposition. By the mid-1930s, the Lovestoneites had formed the American Communist Party (Opposition) with active cells in New York and along the East Coast. During this time, Bookchin came into contact with the Lovestoneites.

While Bookchin undoubtedly harbored reservations against Stalin and the foreign-directed CPUSA, evidence suggests that Bookchin's break with the American Old Left was neither clean nor decisive. Regardless of Bookchin's misgivings about the Moscow Show Trials and the Popular Front, he attempted to leave high school during his first year to fight in the Spanish Civil War at its outbreak in 1936.<sup>17</sup> Only fifteen-years-old in 1936, Bookchin was barred from service due to his age. He instead took a job after school working in a recruitment office for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Bookchin's limited contact with Left Oppositionists from Lovestoneite circles and his admiration for Trotsky did not prompt him to leave the CPUSA. Bookchin was eventually tossed out of the Party for "Trotskyite Deviationism" in 1939, after he spoke out against the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, in clear violation of the official Party line directed from Moscow. Bookchin's dismissal was separate from the expulsion of the Shactmanites, who split from the CPUSA in 1939 over the same issue.<sup>19</sup>

Upon graduation from high school in 1940, Bookchin relocated across the Hudson River, where he found work as a foundryman in New Jersey.<sup>20</sup> His disillusionment with the CPUSA prompted him to remove himself from the underground networks and radical circles that shaped

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<sup>17</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, x.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>19</sup> Biehl, "A Short Biography of Murray Bookchin," 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

his childhood.<sup>21</sup> Yet, economic responsibilities prevented him from being able to move too far away from his working class parents.<sup>22</sup> It seems likely, however, that his dissatisfaction resided with bickering and infighting that paralyzed the CPUSA and not with Marxist-Leninist ideology or the revolutionary cause. Working in the foundry, Bookchin engaged in union activism and worker organization. In his later writings, Bookchin continually agreed with New Left criticisms that the Old Left was overly obsessed with “toeing the Party line;” however, he always defended the rank and file radicals of 1930s, calling them “true revolutionaries” who acted according to their beliefs in a genuine effort to “construct a better society.”<sup>23</sup>

Bookchin left the foundry in New Jersey during World War II to take a job with General Motors. Still committed to the cause of workers’ revolt, he became a member of the United Automobile Workers and then took a post as a strike organizer for the militant Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).<sup>24</sup> At the outset of American involvement in World War II, the CIO and its founder, John L. Lewis, already had a radical reputation. Lewis retired as president of the CIO in 1940 over his dissatisfaction with Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, but, as a leader of the UMW (United Mine Workers), led miners’ strikes in 1941 and 1943 in flagrant defiance of the No Strike Policy, which the unions had agreed to with the Roosevelt administration at the beginning of the war.<sup>25</sup> Even without Lewis, the CIO maintained its radical culture, and in this environment, Bookchin felt right at home. With the war drawing to a close, Bookchin worked feverishly to prepare is GM coworkers for a strike, as tensions between

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<sup>21</sup> Murray Bookchin, ed. Janet Biehl, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” 1-18.

<sup>22</sup> Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xi.

<sup>23</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” *Social Text*, Vol. 9/10 (Summer 1984), 248.

<sup>24</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xii.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 55-60.

General Motors ownership and UAW president Walter Reuther increased over fears of recession when the War Department contracts dried up.

Not long after V-J Day, the UAW, led by Walter Reuther, went on strike, and 32,000 workers left their posts at General Motors on November 21, 1945. Bookchin fully supported the strike and was confident in Reuther's leadership. Reuther himself came from a fairly radical past.<sup>26</sup> Born in 1907 to an American mother and German immigrant father, from a young age Reuther's father immersed the boy in union politics and socialist ideals. As a young boy, Reuther met with Eugene V. Debs while Debs was in prison for his resistance to American involvement in World War I. Meeting Debs proved to be one of the formative experiences of Reuther's life, and Reuther entered the twenties and the thirties a committed Debsian socialist. He dropped out of high school at sixteen and moved to Detroit, drawn by the allure of the socialistic idealism that permeated the city's automotive plants and unions. In November 1945, Reuther came to the bargaining table demanding a thirty percent wage increase in addition to pushing for some of the components of industrial democracy. The UAW demanded "codetermination," which would have given factory employees a say in company policy and management.<sup>27</sup>

A 113-day standoff ensued between General Motors and the members of UAW Local 147. Reuther challenged GM to "open its books" and prove to the public that the company could not actually afford the thirty percent wage increase without increasing the prices of its products. Murray Bookchin was among the most radical elements in the UAW, and he wanted no compromise on the demand that the union be given greater say in company management.<sup>28</sup> As time progressed, Reuther, on the other hand, became far more willing to make a deal in order to

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<sup>26</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xii.

<sup>27</sup> Bill Goode, *Infighting in the UAW: The 1946 Election and the Ascendancy of Walter Reuther* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1994), 73-92.

<sup>28</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xii.

resolve the labor dispute as well as to advance his own position within the union. Reuther never received the power to open up GM's ledgers. After three months, however, the company offered an eighteen percent wage increase, but refused to concede any decision making power to the union. Reuther accepted the deal, much to the chagrin of Bookchin and other left wing radicals within the UAW's ranks.<sup>29</sup>

Bookchin departed the picket line utterly disgusted by the result of the strike. In his mind, the UAW had been striking for more than a simple wage increase.<sup>30</sup> Reuther himself had claimed that the UAW's fight was on behalf of the American working class as a whole.<sup>31</sup> The strike sought to secure greater purchasing power for industrial labor in order to "gain a more realistic distribution of America's wealth," in Reuther's words.<sup>32</sup> In Bookchin's eyes, the strike's outcome made Reuther a hypocrite.<sup>33</sup> Reuther accepted General Motors's counter offer, gained nothing terms of worker codetermination, and used the settlement to help propel himself into the union presidency.<sup>34</sup> A year later, Reuther strongly supported the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, which forced communists within unions to declare themselves, in order to purge the UAW and the CIO of its radical elements and secure his own power.

Bookchin resigned from the UAW and headed back home to New York. After the conclusion of the General Motors strike in 1946, Bookchin concluded that revolutionary Marxist-Leninism was a bankrupt ideology.<sup>35</sup> The working class, Bookchin decided, was not and could not act as a revolutionary vehicle away from capitalism and toward socialism and communism. Industrial laborers lacked the sort of foresight and vision to strike for large political

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<sup>29</sup> Goode., 83-92.

<sup>30</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xii.

<sup>31</sup> Goode., 111-138.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>33</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xii.

<sup>34</sup> Goode., 111-138.

<sup>35</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xiii.



gains and placidly accepted wage increases and pensions. Furthermore, no “vanguard” of the working class could be trusted to act in laborers’ best interests. Union leaders and strike organizers, in Bookchin’s view, quickly forgot the concerns of rank and file workers when presented with a chance to advance their own positions.<sup>36</sup> In New York, a dejected Bookchin returned home harboring a vehement personal hatred for Walter Reuther and snide contempt for the labor movement and the ideals of industrial democracy. Bookchin’s career as a young radical and revolutionary activist was over.

Bookchin remained a committed Trotskyist well into the 1940s, but ultimately his orthodox interpretations of Karl Marx finally convinced him of the impossibility of a worker’s revolution in the United States. In the nineteenth century, Marx engaged in a heated debate with Mikhail Bakunin and other violent anarchists in Europe over the proper timing and execution of a revolution that would unhinge the Europe’s ruling power structure. While Marx and Bakunin agreed on the necessary role of violence to defeat Europe’s ruling elite, they agreed on little else. Looking at his native Russia, Bakunin argued that every small act of insurrection, assassinations, bombings, murders, and even criminal acts, contributed to the fall of ruling elite. Marx tossed this argument aside, dismissing violent anarchists as “petty thugs” whose meaningless assaults only strengthened the established order and justified the bourgeoisie’s use of force in their own defense.<sup>37</sup> Marx argued that the revolutionary element in Europe had to bide its time for the critical moment. The working classes, Marx argued, would have their chance when war or recession rendered the capitalist hegemony weak and vulnerable. At that time, the workers could seize their opportunity and revolt. Furthermore, Marx argued that history inexorably marched

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Keller, aka Murray Bookchin, “The American Economy: A Study in Contradictory Forces,” *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 10, no. 37 (Nov.-Dec. 1959), 28-62.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Marx, “Conspectus of Bakunin’s *Statism and Anarchy*,” (accessed online: <http://libcom.org/library/conspectus-statism-anarchy-karl-marx>), updated 2010. Originally Published in 1874.

toward a crisis that would bring capitalism to its knees. The fall of capitalism and the rise of socialism, Marx argued, was a dialectic inevitability.<sup>38</sup>

For radicals in the United States, the Great Depression and the labor strife that it unleashed seemed to be the critical moment Marx had promised. Bookchin was only one of a number of Marxist-Leninists who believed the time for revolution had come to the United States and who bent all their thought and effort to making that revolution a reality. Revolution, however, never came. Rather, the exact opposite happened. The outbreak of World War II re-established the strength of capitalism in the United States and Western Europe. Furthermore, the role played by the Soviet Union in World War II proved highly non-revolutionary. It swallowed up Eastern Europe, crushing rebellions and uprisings along the way for the sake of its own national interests.

By the late 1940s, the American Old Left was broken and scattered. Apart from the economic dislocations caused by war and the tremors and hiccups in the American economy brought on by reconversion, prosperity returned at the conclusion of World War II. Industrial capitalism inexplicably survived the Great Depression, to the eternal befuddlement of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries. Even though rampant unemployment and inflation drove thousands into the ranks of the CPUSA and other organizations of the revolutionary Left during the 1930s, a serious challenge to the American status quo never materialized. Labor unions struck and strategized, gained more lucrative settlements and contracts, but a true workers' revolt with the intent of seizing governmental power never came to pass in the United States.

The return of prosperity after the war undercut whatever limited momentum a workers' movement gained during the Depression. Even more surprising to the Old Left, capitalism in the

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<sup>38</sup> Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (New York: Dodo Press, 2009). Originally published 1871.

United States gained greater strength after the Depression and the war. The United States emerged from World War II not so much as the world's greatest industrial power, but, for all practical purposes, the United States emerged from the war as the world's only industrial power. The country's global competition was virtually destroyed. Western Europe and the Soviet Union teetered on the edge of economic collapse. Germany, Europe's most powerful industrial economy prior to World War II, lay in utter ruin. Japan, virtually the only non-Western industrial nation prior to the war, had been bombed into submission. Yet, the United States, with a massive heavy industrial infrastructure created for the war, was untouched, and protected by the expanse of two oceans. Capitalism in the United States roared back to life. The American economy spent billions of dollars reconstructing war-torn Western Europe and Japan, and the United States solidified its position as a military and economic superpower for the purpose of checking the expansion of communism around the world.

Internally, the revolutionary ideologies and organizations that had witnessed a swelling in their power and membership through the 1930s watched their gains dwindle in the face of renewed prosperity.<sup>39</sup> The breadlines produced by high unemployment during the Depression had produced many of the Old Left's recruits. Their disappearance dried up a substantial recruitment pool for the CPUSA and other radical organizations.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Bookchin regarded workers' revolution as a goal brought to American shores by European immigrants who flocked into the United States' heavy industrial labor jobs.<sup>41</sup> The immigrants' revolutionary fervor was catalyzed as much by the prejudices of the American middle class as it was by low wages or

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<sup>39</sup> Bookchin, "Between the 30s and the 60s," *Social Text*, 250.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

poor work conditions.<sup>42</sup> A halt in emigration to the United States from Eastern and Southern Europe caused by the war curtailed an even more crucial recruitment pool for the CPUSA.<sup>43</sup> American laborers, paid well in relation to the working classes in Europe, displayed only limited interest in the revolutionary ideologies of immigrants so long as their economic conditions remained favorable.<sup>44</sup>

The wide dissemination of information about the true destructive nature of Stalinism – already long known but now undeniable in the context of the Cold War – added to the Old Left’s waning power. During the late forties and early fifties, a vast literature on the depraved and totalitarian nature of Soviet Communism sprang into being, emerging from nearly every discipline within the academy and from both sides of the political spectrum.<sup>45</sup> Two of the most famous criticisms of Soviet Communism came from the fields of philosophy and theology. Reinhold Niebuhr, an American theologian and social critic, and Hannah Arendt, a German-born social philosopher, equated Hitler and Stalin’s regimes. Niebuhr’s, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944) and Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) argued that Nazi Germany and Stalin’s USSR were both manifestations of the same political system, totalitarianism.<sup>46</sup>

Niebuhr based his argument on Christian theology. The human organism, he contended, was naturally inclined toward selfish and evil acts as a result of original sin – Adam and Eve’s

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 361-367.

<sup>46</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: The Vindication of Democracy and Critique of its Traditional Defense* (New York: Scribner, 1960). Originally published in 1944. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973). Originally published in 1951.

eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge and Good and Evil.<sup>47</sup> The role of government in society, according to Niebuhr, was to enforce morality; government necessarily had to force unjust humans to act justly.<sup>48</sup> The only form of government, according to Niebuhr, that could perform this necessary function was a republic or democracy.<sup>49</sup> Such a government divided power among a number of government offices and prevented any one individual from gaining too much power, therefore preventing any one individual from being able to act without restraint.<sup>50</sup> The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Niebuhr concluded, offered examples of a complete failure of government to perform its moral task. Both represented an utter societal collapse, where the masses were left unprotected against the destructive impulses of an unchecked and corrupt ruling class.<sup>51</sup>

Hannah Arendt based her philosophical analysis in the historical realities of European imperialism and racism. Arendt posited that the modern totalitarian state, of which Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany were the two prime examples, was “a novel form of government” that blended “ideology and terror.”<sup>52</sup> The totalitarian state justified the brutal manner in which it wielded its unchecked power by using mass communications technology. It used print and radio to fabricate enemies of the state.<sup>53</sup> The police state that controlled the domestic population excused its existence by preying upon prevalent cultural prejudices to fabricate domestic security threats.<sup>54</sup> Externally, totalitarian regimes justified wars of expansion and conquest as a means to

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<sup>47</sup> Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, 13-17.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 20-25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 37-45.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 59-71.

<sup>52</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 593.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 450-461.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 507.

neutralize foreign threats to the state and people.<sup>55</sup> Like a malignant tumor, the totalitarian state absorbed all avenues of power under its vast bureaucracies and crushed individual opposition.<sup>56</sup> Arendt observed that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, two regimes that claimed to be from opposite poles of the political spectrum, functioned according to the same model.<sup>57</sup>

Under the weight of criticism, repression, and a renewed faith in the strength of the American economy, the Old Left withered. Many former Marxist-Leninists followed Irving Kristol in rejecting Communism as a viable political alternative and moving to the Right. Others remained committed to “The Left” in the sense that they refused to join the American liberal consensus.<sup>58</sup> Those who fit into the second category primarily became social critics, theorists, or social philosophers.<sup>59</sup> American universities, rapidly expanding to accommodate the GI Bill and a larger American middle class that craved secondary education, became a haven for the brightest and best-known minds, including Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno, who were among the founders of the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory.<sup>60</sup> Others, like Bookchin, who lacked formal credentials, could not simply retreat to a university office. These thinkers and critics formed ad hoc think tanks, published newsletters and journals, or lived as proverbial starving artists.<sup>61</sup> Those who stayed on “The Left,” however, whether they had a university posting, a small time publishing job, or nothing more than a circle of confidants with whom they corresponded, pondered the same questions. Why did capitalism not come crashing down in the 1930s? How did this new epoch of consumer capitalism that emerged after

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 547-556.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 593.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 593-616.

<sup>58</sup> Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 367-379.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 367-379.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>61</sup> Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” 247.

World War II and the Great Depression fit into the Marxist dialectic, if it did at all? What could be done to amend Marx's dialectic and make it relevant to the twentieth century?

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Between 1946 and 1948, Murray Bookchin left behind his life as an activist to become a theorist. He had always been a voracious reader. At every ideological hurdle he encountered Bookchin scanned the pages of books for the answers that he sought.<sup>62</sup> By the age of 35, when he left the Midwest and the UAW, Bookchin was already well versed in Marxist-Leninist theory. Over the years, he fused the writings of Marx, Hegel, Trotsky, and other materialists and Marxists together with his own life experiences. After work he retreated into personal study, often reading deep into the night.<sup>63</sup> In the late forties, Bookchin put pen to paper and began to compile his own theories about politics and revolution.

In 1948, Bookchin fell in with a ring of disaffected German Trotskyists living in New York City led by Josef Weber, a German political exile.<sup>64</sup> A year earlier, Weber gathered a group of writers in New York City and started a German language periodical titled *Dinge der Zeit*. Most of *Dinge der Zeit*'s contributors were German exiles, like Weber, who hailed primarily from the Trotskyist tradition.<sup>65</sup> A friend of Weber's, the American social critic Dwight Macdonald, used his connections in New York's journalistic circles to launch *Dinge der Zeit*'s publication in West Germany and the Netherlands in 1947, followed by the release of an English

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<sup>62</sup> Janet Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality," (accessed: [http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84 movement &Itemid=2](http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84%20movement&Itemid=2)).

<sup>63</sup> Janet Biehl, *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, xiii.

<sup>64</sup> Marcel Van der Lindin, "The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2001), 127-145.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 128.

translation of the journal, titled *Contemporary Issues*, in New York in 1948.<sup>66</sup> A graduate of Yale University, Macdonald had edited the left wing journal *Partisan Review* since 1937. In 1944, Macdonald left to start his own rival journal, titled *Politics*, which included among its regular contributions the likes of George Orwell, Bruno Bettelheim, and C. Wright Mills. Macdonald had engaged in his own romance with the ideals of Leon Trotsky through the 1930s and 1940s, and, much like Weber and Bookchin, was, by the late forties, attempting to grapple with both the failure of the Old Left and the horrific realities of Soviet Communism under Stalin.<sup>67</sup>

With the release of the English language version of *Contemporary Issues* in 1948, Weber approached Murray Bookchin and other former American radicals with an offer to join the contributing staff in the interest of disseminating the opinions of a varied “group of likeminded individuals concerned with social, economic, and political problems facing the modern world.”<sup>68</sup> Weber intended to create a politically eclectic journal that encompassed voices from a range of left wing traditions, including socialists, anarchists, and communists of one order or another, into what he called a “democracy of content.”<sup>69</sup> The authors, contributors, and editors cloaked their names, allowing them to write freely without fear of recourse. Bookchin wrote for the journal using four separate nom de plumes: Lewis Herber, Robert Keller, Harry Ludd, and M.S. Shiloh.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore the initial mission statement of *Contemporary Issues* criticized all those “who [had] ever accepted any government office directly or ‘indirectly’ and who [had] ever supported any government propaganda whether Russian or ‘democratic’.”<sup>71</sup> Under the name

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<sup>66</sup> Ulrich Jacobs to Dwight Macdonald, 30 December 1947 (<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/bps/images/weber.pdf>), catalogued in Archive Dinge Der Zeit, Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv, Zurich (SSA), 201.39.4/1.

<sup>67</sup> Van der Linden, “The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism,” 128.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>70</sup> Murray Bookchin to Van der Linden, 30 March 1998.

<sup>71</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber) “On the Subject of Germany and World Strategy,” *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (June, 1948), 1-16.



Ernst Zander, Weber “openly” criticized Herbert Marcuse, who had served for the Office of War Information (OWI) and then the United States Army Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II, for collaborating with the “democratic” government, as well as a score of other left wing writers and thinkers who had supported the Popular Front. Such a statement established *Dinge der Zeit* and *Contemporary Issues* as a forum for a “free floating intelligentsia” that “identified neither with the Western elite nor with the Soviet leadership.”<sup>72</sup>

To an extent, *Contemporary Issues* lived up to Josef Weber’s vision. Almost every constituency on the far Left had at least some representation among the writers and contributors of the periodical. Former and lingering Trotskyists, however, comprised by far the majority of the journal’s contributors, and Josef Weber’s personal views were the chief guiding opinion of *Contemporary Issues*’s “democracy of content.”<sup>73</sup> Weber proved exceedingly adept at keeping the journal afloat, even during the height of American anticommunism, and ensuring the secrecy of his contributors.<sup>74</sup> A full list of authors to *Contemporary Issues* remains unknown. Weber was so talented at maintaining secrecy that Dwight Macdonald commented:

The heights to which this kind of masquerade (the writers’ pseudonyms) can go was shown a couple of months ago when one of [Weber’s] group was sitting on my own sofa. The talk came around to *Dinge*, which I praised highly. I asked him whether he had heard of it, and if he knew anything about the people putting it out. He actually did not tell me a thing, and spoke of it as something entirely separate from his own political group and ideas!<sup>75</sup>

Murray Bookchin was among only a handful of New York City radicals who eventually came forward and admitted their contributions to Weber’s periodical. The others included, Virginia Davis, Mina Grossman, Jack Grossman, Robert Ilson, Phil MacDougal, Jacob Schwartz,

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>73</sup> Van der Linden, 131.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>75</sup> Dwight Macdonald to Ulrich Jacobs, 1 March 1948. (<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/bps/images/weber.pdf>), also catalogued under SSA 201.39.1/1948.

Jacob Suhl, Harold Wurf, Ulrich Jacobs, and Weber himself. Max Laufer and Fritz Besser, two German exiles in Great Britain, also served as Weber's consultants and confidants.<sup>76</sup> Weber was less adept, however, at ensuring that disagreeable opinions, especially those opinions that challenged his own, received a place in *Contemporary Issues*. Thus Weber's periodical became much more of a petri dish for the application of Weber's unorthodox take Trotskyism by a variety of writers rather than an eclectic and "democratic" journal of opinion.<sup>77</sup>

Weber, who exiled himself from Germany in 1933 to escape Hitler's regime, was left deeply depressed by the rise of Fascism and the perversion of Communism by the Bolsheviks in the 1920s and 1930s. As he left Europe, Weber predicted that the Nazis would ultimately overwhelm the Soviets and bring about "fifty years of fascism in Europe."<sup>78</sup> However, as leader of the *Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands* (IKD) in exile he continued to direct the Party according to the line set by Leon Trotsky. He abandoned orthodox Trotskyism in 1945 or 1946, around the same time as Murray Bookchin did. Four articles in *Contemporary Issues*, written by Josef Weber and published after his death, explained Weber's deviation from an orthodox Trotskyist outlook.<sup>79</sup> Marcel Van der Linden condensed the articles and organized Weber's unorthodox Trotsky-inspired theory into eight points.<sup>80</sup>

First, Weber believed that the failure of the labor movement to destroy capitalism and the centrist "democratic" political governments that protected the capitalist economic system had corrupted the movement and interrupted Marx's dialectic. Second, although capitalism escaped

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<sup>76</sup> Van der Linden, 140.

<sup>77</sup> Josef Weber, *Dinge der Zeit: Critical Literature on Culture and Politics* (Hamburg: Argument, 1995) 16-28.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>79</sup> The four articles are: Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "Reflections on 'Reflections'," *Contemporary Issues* Vol. 5 (Winter 1959), 10-28. Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "On the 'Inner Limit' of Capitalism," *Contemporary Issues*, No. 40 (Spring 1961), 268-302. Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "A World Plan for the Solution of Modern Society's Economic and Social Crisis," *Contemporary Issues*, No. 41, (Summer 1961), 30-34. Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "Some Comments on the Organization Question," *Contemporary Issues*, No. 44 (Fall 1962), 260-301.

<sup>80</sup> Van der Linden, 130.

its preordained death, it had entered an age of decline where the constant need for growth and expansion, and the wars that this economic need precipitated, would destroy civilization unless timely action were taken. Third, capitalism at this point sought “support for its self-preservation and falls back upon stages already undergone,” devolving and reproducing aspects of earlier types of societies it had integrated: mercantilist, feudal, and slave. Fourth, in this state of decline capitalism developed a tendency for ecological self-destruction. Fifth, a decline in the general level of intellectual and cultural achievement accompanied the decline of capitalist production. Sixth, in Weber’s view, the only remedy to the existing order of things was to mobilize the majority of the world population that did not benefit from the present status quo. Seventh, Weber believed that committed revolutionaries had to reach out to the developing world as a vehicle of revolution, because the disappearance of scarcity in the industrial world had co-opted the revolutionary impulses of the industrial working class. Finally, in order to prevent a repeat of the abuses of Soviet Communism, any new revolutionary government that followed the fall of capitalist nation-states could never extend beyond the *polis*, the town, the city.<sup>81</sup>

Weber’s ideas formed the backbone of *Dinge der Zeit* and *Contemporary Issues*. His unorthodox adaptation of Trotsky influenced, to some extent, all of the writers who contributed to his periodical, including Bookchin.<sup>82</sup> From 1948, when Bookchin first joined *Contemporary Issues* at Weber’s behest, until 1959, when Bookchin left the journal after Weber’s death, Bookchin was one of the periodical’s most prolific and inventive contributors. During the aforementioned eleven year period, he published nineteen articles. After Weber’s death, he published only two more articles in *Contemporary Issues*, one in 1961 and one in 1962.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 131-132.

<sup>82</sup> Bookchin to Van der Linden, 30 March 1998.

Bookchin's earliest contributions to *Contemporary Issues* focused on the failure of the labor movement in Western Europe and the United States and the "betrayal" of the international workers' movement by the leadership of the Soviet Union, predominantly Stalin and his cohorts. In 1952 Bookchin published "Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe," claiming that Stalin carried Hitler's genocidal pattern forward after the end of World War II.<sup>83</sup> Bookchin's analyses of the deep seated anti-Semitism that drove Stalinism echoed Hannah Arendt, and compared American segregation to European anti-Semitism. Hidden in this analysis lay the beginnings of a comprehensive explanation of why, in Bookchin's opinion, Marxist-Leninism failed in the United States. In his estimation, a Bolshevik-styled uprising failed in the United States because it was not an "indigenous" American movement.<sup>84</sup> He argued that revolutionary Marxism was brought to American shores by European immigrants who failed to make the theory relevant to the American situation. To begin with, Bookchin observed, an orthodox application of Marx lacked a key component for application to the United States. For Marx, class was the decisive category, and it was the class struggle that drove all the forces of history and politics. Living and writing in nineteenth century Germany, in a racially homogenous society, Marx downplayed the importance of race. In the United States however, the race struggle drove the economic and political machinery of the country with every bit as much power as the class struggle. Bookchin

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<sup>83</sup> In 1991, Bookchin, re-evaluating the claims that he made in the article redacted them, stating, "I partly renounce this article. Hitler killed most of the Jews in Europe, few remained for Stalin to murder." ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/biehlbiblio.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/biehlbiblio.html)).

<sup>84</sup> There is no clear link between Bookchin and Weber concerning this conclusion. This critique is strikingly similar to Jay Lovestone's position that the CPUSA had to pursue non-revolutionary policies tailored to the American context. Bookchin's critique could be linked to earlier contacts he made with members of the CPUSA (Opposition).

concluded that a new revolutionary ideology within the United States had to include a dual mobilization of both the economically and racially marginalized.<sup>85</sup>

Bookchin's burgeoning interest in ecology led to his greatest departure from Weber and *Dinge der Zeit*'s cohort of "half-Trotskyists." Environmental concerns played at least a limited role in Weber's theoretical constructions; however, Weber's application of ecology was never as systematic or thorough as Bookchin's.<sup>86</sup> Using the nom de plume "Lewis Herber," Bookchin explored a number of environmental issues, ranging from concerns over chemical fertilizers, radiation, and other pollutants to studies on the effects of urbanization on a surrounding ecosystem. The first of these ecological studies, titled "The Problem of Chemicals in Food," appeared in *Contemporary Issues* in June 1952. Compiled from medical data, cancer statistics, and oncology journals, Bookchin's article explored the possible long term ramifications for human health caused by the introduction of X-radiation and pesticides into the environment. He revisited the issue in 1955 with two more articles entitled, "A Follow-Up on the Problem of Chemicals in Food," and "Reply to Letters on Chemicals in Food." Together, the three articles argued that there was enough correlation between increased X-radiation levels in the environment and rising cancer rates to warrant further investigation. Furthermore, he argued that pesticides effectively wiped out insect populations and were being employed without a full understanding of the importance of insect-plant relationships to ecological stability.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> These sentiments of Bookchin's come out the strongest in two essays. Harry Ludd, aka Murray Bookchin, "The Fate of American Civil Liberties," *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 4, no. 16 (Nov.-Dec. 1953). And, Murray Bookchin, "America on the Road to Hitler and Stalin," *Contemporary Issues* leaflet (Jan. 1954).

<sup>86</sup> Biehl, "The Originality of Bookchin." (accessed: [http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2](http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2))

<sup>87</sup> Lewis Herber, aka Murray Bookchin, "The Problem of Chemicals in Food," *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 3, no. 12 (Jun.-Aug. 1952). Lewis Herber, aka Murray Bookchin, "A Follow-Up on the Problem of Chemicals in Food," *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 6, no. 21 (Jan.-Feb. 1955), 51-57. Lewis Herber, aka Murray Bookchin, "Reply to Letters on Chemicals in Food," *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 6, no. 21 (Jan.-Feb. 1955), 74-79.

Adopting another pseudonym, “Robert Keller,” Bookchin set aside his interests in environment temporarily in 1956, to comment on the Hungarian revolt against the Soviet Union. During the Hungarian revolt, *Dinge der Zeit* and *Contemporary Issues* reached their highest circulation numbers during a campaign for solidarity with the rebels that urged the United States and other Western governments to intervene.<sup>88</sup> Bookchin published a leaflet through *Contemporary Issues* on November 3, 1956, titled, “We Cannot Let Russian Armor Crush the People of Hungary!” Bookchin called for “Guns, tanks, artillery [to be] poured across every available border and dropped for the skies [to arm the Hungarian rebels].” The leaflet gained considerable recognition amongst sympathizers in New York and greatly pleased the rebels, who received a translated copy of the publication.<sup>89</sup>

By 1958, Bookchin returned to his interest in ecology and, under the name “Lewis Herber,” wrote three more articles that were published in August 1960. “Land and City,” “The Rise of the Bourgeois City,” and “Limits of the Bourgeois City,” constituted a meticulous application of Josef Weber’s theory that as capitalism grew and decayed it became increasingly ecologically self-destructive. In order to meet the consumption needs of large and centralized population, Bookchin argued, bourgeois society extracted resources at a constantly accelerating rate. This condition heightened the dangers for soil degradation, erosion, deforestation, pollution, and contamination. These factors increased the probability of catastrophic nuclear or biological war due to competition for increasingly rare natural resources. They also increased the probability of famine and disease epidemics brought about by human caused ecological disasters. Bookchin further held that the working class could not be counted on to assume a revolutionary

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<sup>88</sup> Van der Linden, 137.

<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately the *N.W. Ayer & Son’s Directory to Newspapers and Periodicals* did not track *Dinge der Zeit* or *Contemporary Issues*’ circulation levels. The increase in popularity is based upon testimonial given by Murray Bookchin to Marcel Van der Linden. Ibid., 137.

role because bourgeois society had co-opted industrial labor. Moreover, any relevant revolutionary program would address these pressing ecological matters.<sup>90</sup> Although he prescribed no immediate solution to the environmental dangers facing the modern world, Bookchin agreed with Weber that quick and decisive action was necessary.

*Contemporary Issues* began to fall apart after Weber's death in 1959. Although the group of writers that formed the journal's core were officially anti-authoritarian, Weber clearly provided the necessary focus and vision that held the periodical together. Although *Contemporary Issues* continued to publish well into the 1960s, it lost the readership and contributors that the journal commanded through the fifties. After Weber's death, Bookchin more or less distanced himself from Weber's New York group.<sup>91</sup>

Even though Bookchin went his own way, the lasting influence of his early writing career and his collaboration with Josef Weber cannot be understated. Bookchin claimed that he met with Weber on a near-daily basis during the 1950s.<sup>92</sup> Every step in Bookchin's intellectual maturation involved the guiding hand of *Dinge der Zeit*. Under Weber's tutelage, Bookchin developed a systematic analytical lens best described as "ecological materialism." His thought remained firmly grounded in Marxian materialism, particularly in Bookchin's application of Marxian themes of alienation found in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Bookchin's thought, however, owed a great deal to the influence of Josef Weber as well. Marx posited an estrangement of man from nature, rooted in the estrangement of laborer from commodity. Marx further maintained that this estrangement was reified by the process by which

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<sup>90</sup> Although written separately, and republished as separate chapters of a later book, these three articles were initially published together as a single article in 1960. Lewis Herber, (Murray Bookchin), "The Limits of the City," *Contemporary Issues*, vol. 10, no. 39 (Aug.-Sept. 1960), 35-68.

<sup>91</sup> Van der Linden, 137.

<sup>92</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 30.

a worker turned raw materials into a finished commodity. Over time, Marx argued, the process of production obscured the relationship between things that belonged together, most fundamentally the relationship between humanity and the natural world. This theme also resonated strongly in Bookchin's writings.<sup>93</sup> Many of Weber's ideas also permeated Bookchin's "ecological materialism." Weber's arguments that capitalism had outlived its "preordained" fall and entered a period of decay, that this decay included ecological self-destruction, and that a new revolutionary ideology needed to seek economic and political decentralization all found their place in Bookchin's own theories. Bookchin was both so loyal and so innovative in his application of these ideas that Weber had intended to name Bookchin his heir as leader and editor of *Dinge der Zeit*.<sup>94</sup>

Bookchin, however, went his own way, and despite the intellectual debt he owed, Bookchin's theoretical contributions published in the 1960s revised and enriched Weber's unorthodox Trotskyism. Bookchin's "ecological materialism," developed during his years writing for *Contemporary Issues*, became a prototype for Social Ecology. In the 1960s, and perhaps as early as the late 1950s, Bookchin delved deeper into classical anarchist theories and eventually ceased to refer to himself as a Marxist, at least in any political sense of the label.<sup>95</sup> During the course of this transition, he distinguished himself from Josef Weber in one extremely important aspect. Bookchin ultimately escaped the deep seated pessimism of Weber's theory. Whereas Weber argued that the decline of capitalism precipitated a decline in intellectual achievement, Bookchin came to believe in the exceptionalism of ecology. Bookchin argued that

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<sup>93</sup> Bookchin does a treatment of Marxian alienation in "Limits of the City." Marx was a human centered theorist, and he was not concerned by environmental issues. Bookchin added this environmental component to alienation in his own interpretation.

<sup>94</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 30.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.



ecology “may yet restore and even transcend the liberartory estate of the traditional sciences and philosophies,” because bourgeois society, when faced with the scientific proof of its own peril, could be persuaded to take the measures necessary to avoid catastrophe.<sup>96</sup>

After a 38 year career in the Marxist Left, Murray Bookchin entered the 1960s on the cusp of a revolutionary ideology that he believed addressed the realities of the postwar United States. Simultaneously, a new American Left was beginning to materialize, one that, at least initially, was working as hard as Bookchin to leave the shadow of Marx and Bolshevism. This new American Left existed in the academy and in the critiques of the Frankfurt School, and it resonated with a generation of young Americans, born after World War II, who were beginning their collegiate careers. The unprecedented affluence of the United States in the 1960s and the continuing realities of racism, the Cold War, and fears concerning nuclear annihilation brought this New Left into being and thrust it into a decade long battle with the values of American Liberalism.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 58.

## Chapter 2

### Social Ecology (1962-1969)

The logical starting point for an evaluation of Murray Bookchin's contributions to historical and revolutionary theory would be a recent debate between the Dutch social historian, Marcel Van der Linden, and the Social Ecologist, Janet Biehl. The debate began with an article that Van der Linden published 2001. In the article, he argued that Bookchin's political, historical, and theoretical articles published in the 1960s, which formed the backbone of Bookchin's theory, Social Ecology, owed a considerable debt of influence to the German Trotskyist, Josef Weber. Biehl returned fire in 2008 with an article published in *Communalism*, the main journal for Social Ecologists, that defended Bookchin's originality and claimed that he and Weber mutually influenced one another.<sup>97</sup>

Both Van der Linden and Biehl brought compelling arguments to the table, and both made some exaggerations and omissions. As Van der Linden suggested, Bookchin himself acknowledged that Weber's unorthodox take on Trotskyism provided a rough schematic for Social Ecology.<sup>98</sup> The near-daily frequency with which the two men conferred during Bookchin's tenure at *Dinge der Zeit*, at which time Bookchin was still only in his mid-thirties, certainly shaped Bookchin's outlook.<sup>99</sup> To Bookchin, Weber's work seemed to provide the best explanation for the failure of the labor movement, and Weber seemed to be on the verge of a

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<sup>97</sup> Biehl was a student of Bookchin's at the Institute of Social Ecology, and after Bookchin's death in 2006, she took charge in his stead. Van der Linden, on the other hand, was a social historian whose evaluation of Bookchin was researched out of Josef Weber's personal papers. Considering their differences of opinion, the disparity in their personal attachment to Bookchin himself, and their research methodology is important to note. Marcel Van der Linden, "The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," *International Institute of Social History* (The Netherlands: 2001), 127-145. Janet Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality – A Reply to Marcel Van der Linden," *Communalism* ([http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2](http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=194:bookchins-originality-a-reply-to-marcel-van-der-linden&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2): April, 2008).

<sup>98</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 30.

<sup>99</sup> Van der Linden, 140.

realistic revolutionary alternative to Marxist-Leninism.<sup>100</sup> Also supporting Van der Linden's case is the stark productive drop-off Bookchin experienced after Weber's death. After composing nearly two articles a year for *Dinge der Zeit* while Weber was the editor, Bookchin's pace slowed considerably for the next four years, from 1959 to 1963.<sup>101</sup>

Van der Linden, however, minimized Bookchin's departures from Weber's ideas. Although Van der Linden extensively explored the origins of Weber's intellectual evolution and involvement with *Dinge der Zeit*, he did not explore Bookchin's development with the same depth and missed some key points. First of all, in 1946 Bookchin and Weber simultaneously developed a deep dissatisfaction with the labor movement and the goal of a workers' revolution. It seemed that their critiques of Stalinism and the American Old Left likely matured side by side, as opposed to the scenario set up by Van der Linden, which suggested that Weber led Bookchin.<sup>102</sup> Van der Linden claimed that Bookchin's special interest in ecology ultimately set him apart from Weber; however, he did little to explain what drove Bookchin's interest and how Bookchin arrived at the point where he believed that environmental science had a revolutionary application.<sup>103</sup>

Accounting for Bookchin's intellectual independence from Weber, a gap that only grew wider after Weber died, Biehl filled in the holes in Van der Linden's analysis. In addition to seeking the counsel of contemporaries during an intellectual crisis, Bookchin, turned to books. As Biehl suggested, he would have had to have look no further than Trotsky's writings to find many of the answers he sought, and to be set on an alternative revolutionary path.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>101</sup> Bookchin did release a book in 1962 under the nom de plume "Lewis Herber" entitled *Our Synthetic Environment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962). The book, however, was primarily a synthesis of earlier "muckraking" environmental articles that he had published for *Dinge der Zeit*.

<sup>102</sup> Van der Linden, 139.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 142.

Trotsky himself had said that if the proletariat failed to make a revolution in the Second World War, then Marxists would have to rethink everything.<sup>104</sup>

As intellectually committed to Trotsky as was Bookchin, Josef Weber likely was aware of and pondered the same pronouncement. Attempting to grapple with the implications of the war and the course of capitalism, Weber compiled the eight theoretical points striving toward an updated outlook on the political economy summarized earlier.<sup>105</sup> Weber's third thesis, which Biehl called "The Retrogression Thesis," appeared in an article he released in October 1944 titled, "Capitalist Barbarism or Socialism."<sup>106</sup> Observing the brutal violence of World War II, Weber argued that capitalism would now begin to re-express earlier stages of its evolution – barbarism, slavery, feudalism, despotism – in order to reassert its control against all opposition.<sup>107</sup> According to Biehl, Bookchin was, at the same time, "looking for a new theory [of capitalism] that reflected these new realities."<sup>108</sup> Weber's article prompted Bookchin to contact him in 1944, before Bookchin left New York to fulfill his commitments to General Motors and the CIO.<sup>109</sup> The two men connected instantly on a personal level.<sup>110</sup> When he returned to New York City in 1946, Bookchin reunited with Weber and, according to Biehl, "they began working together closely [on a new theoretical outlook], discussing ideas together."<sup>111</sup>

Murray Bookchin's special concentration on ecology (which extended far beyond Weber's interest in the science) and his intense concern for environmental issues further separated him from Weber. As Bookchin's scientific acumen increased, Biehl argued, he began

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<sup>104</sup> Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality."

<sup>105</sup> A summary of Weber's eight theses is provided on pages 17 and 18 of chapter 1, "The Old Left and the Origins of Social Ecology (1921-1959)."

<sup>106</sup> Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality."

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

to regard Weber's opinions on environmental issues as "embarrassingly" simplistic.<sup>112</sup> By 1950, Weber was convinced that the rising cancer rate in the United States could be explained solely by chemicals in food. Weber wrote in "The Great Utopia" (1950):

Bernard Aschner [A Viennese doctor residing in New York since 1938] adduces some good reasons in his book, *The Art of the Healer* (1947), for the conclusion that that cancer is of chemical origin.<sup>113</sup>

Bookchin wrote "The Problem of Chemicals in Food" two years later, with the intent of laying out the issue in a far more complex and pragmatic manner than Weber had done.<sup>114</sup> Bookchin attributed the rise in cancer rates to a number of issues including chemical fertilizers, pollutants, X-radiation, and demography.<sup>115</sup>

Even though the *Dinge der Zeit* group collectively discussed soil degradation, deforestation, pollution, and other environmental problems, Bookchin became far more individually engrossed in the topic than the rest of the group.<sup>116</sup> He turned to sources outside of Weber's circle to further his ecological understanding. Those sources included, in particular, an English ecologist Charles S. Elton, whose book, *The Ecology of Invasions* (1958), remained close to Bookchin's heart throughout his life, as did Edward Hyams' *Soil and Civilization* (1952).<sup>117</sup> Bookchin's personal scientific study led to the publication of "The Problem of Chemicals in Food" in *Contemporary Issues* and *Dinge der Zeit* in 1952. He remained intensely

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "The Great Utopia," *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (New York: 1950), 7.

<sup>114</sup> Lewis Herber (Murray Bookchin), "The Problem of Chemicals in Food," *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (New York: Summer 1952), 236.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 236. Curiously, Bookchin missed the research produced on the link between cigarette smoking and cancer. Although Bookchin's research echoes that of Carl Hueper, the author found no evidence that Bookchin was aware of Hueper.

<sup>116</sup> Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality," Bookchin, "The Problem of Chemicals in Food..."

<sup>117</sup> Janet Biehl, e-mail to author, 20 February 2011. Charles S. Elton, *The Ecology of Invasions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Originally published in 1958. Edward Hyams, *Soil and Civilization* (London: Harpercollins, 1976). Originally published in 1952. Bookchin cites both Elton and Hyams in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 287-288.

proud of this work for its originality. Its critique of modern industrial agriculture preceded Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* by a decade. Furthermore, Bookchin's first book major book of the 1960s, *Our Synthetic Environment*, published by Alfred Knopf in 1962, achieved a synthesis of this article and other ecological studies undertaken by Bookchin during his days with *Dinge der Zeit*. He composed it largely outside of Weber's influence.<sup>118</sup> Bookchin considered *Our Synthetic Environment* an ecological study that was not related to the *Dinge* group's political agenda.<sup>119</sup>

If Van der Linden's stance was correct, then Social Ecology originated from Weber's ideas, and Bookchin expanded its framework after Weber's death. If Biehl's stance was correct, then Bookchin was drawn to Weber because of the two men's like mindedness, but Bookchin's ideas did not originate from Weber's thoughts. She attributed Bookchin's affinity for Weber to the close relationship the two developed in Weber's last years.<sup>120</sup> Even though Bookchin "adored" Weber, and viewed him as a "father figure," Biehl suggested that this had more to do with Nathan Bookchin's departure from Murray's life when Murray was six than it did with an intellectual debt to Weber's ideas.<sup>121</sup>

As is usually the case, the truth likely lies between the two poles of this debate. Ultimately, whether or not Bookchin needed Weber's help to jettison Marxist-Leninism and develop an alternative revolutionary ideology is unimportant. The fact of the matter is that Bookchin did indeed receive help, whether he needed it or not. The debate between Van der Linden and Biehl is intellectually useful, however, because both participants agree on one major fact: Weber's eight theses provided a "jumping off point" for Bookchin and Social Ecology,

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<sup>118</sup> Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality," "The Problems of Chemicals in Food...".

<sup>119</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 66.

<sup>120</sup> Biehl, "Bookchin's Originality," "The Problems of Chemicals in Food...".

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

regardless of whether Weber led Bookchin to this precipice or whether Bookchin arrived there collaboratively.<sup>122</sup>

As previously stated, Bookchin's writing came to an abrupt halt after Weber's death. He did not write or publish a single article for the remainder of 1959 and the entirety of 1960. An explanation for this sudden lull in productivity unfortunately died with Bookchin. If anyone who knew him personally ever ascertained an answer, he or she never recorded it. It is likely that the loss of a guiding figure in Bookchin's life played a significant role in the sudden work stoppage. Van der Linden's "Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism" argued that Weber's death caused Bookchin's halt in production.<sup>123</sup> Other likely factors contributing to Bookchin's stunted pace were distractions in his personal life and time taken to evaluate where the next step of his intellectual progress would lead. Biehl's work on Bookchin makes the case for this analysis.

Bookchin's productive pace quickened in 1964 after the publication of "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought". In the article Bookchin hinted at having made several theoretical discoveries that would be expanded in further articles.<sup>124</sup> He released a series of articles from 1964 to 1968 that laid down the foundation of a comprehensive critique of contemporary industrial capitalism, as it existed in the United States during the height of postwar prosperity, and a revolutionary alternative to the capitalist status quo. He called his theory Social Ecology and its praxis Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Meant to be viewed together, Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism argued for the reorganization of society along the lines of ecological sustainability. Bookchin believed that this new outlook completed the revolutionary project upon

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<sup>122</sup> Van der Linden interviewed Murray Bookchin in the spring of 1998. Biehl's rebuttal was based on an interview she conducted with Bookchin in 2003. By 2003, Bookchin's health was beginning to fail, and he could no longer write. He died in 2006.

<sup>123</sup> Van der Linden, "Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," 138.

<sup>124</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Comment* [Independent Pamphlet] (Fall 1964), 16.

which Josef Weber had embarked. It was the product of a rich intellectual heritage melded together through Bookchin's (sometimes haphazard) interpretations of classical Marxism, Weberian Trotskyism, and classical Anarchist theory. Finally, Bookchin believed that his outlook provided a ready and applicable alternative to "obsolete revolutionary dogmas."<sup>125</sup> This chapter will evaluate the critique of capitalism provided by Social Ecology. The following chapter will evaluate Bookchin's revolutionary alternative to the capitalist status quo, Post-Scarcity Anarchism.

### **Social Ecology**

At its fundamental core, Social Ecology held "that nearly all present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, its critique argued that "present ecological problems cannot be dealt with, much less understood, without resolutely tackling the social problems of scarcity and hierarchical domination."<sup>127</sup> In order to understand this critique and its origins fully, several terms and concepts presented here need to be unpacked, and their roots need to be traced back through time to earlier social theories.

### **Ecological Materialism<sup>128</sup>**

Ecological Materialism is a term that might best describe a mode of critical application that Murray Bookchin developed during his years writing for *Dinge der Zeit* and then transplanted into Social Ecology. It refers to a peculiarity in Bookchin's thought that derived from a number of sources. Ecological Materialism served as a prototype for Social Ecology and

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<sup>125</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1971), 66.

<sup>126</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971), 55. Originally published as Lewis Herber (Murray Bookchin), "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Comment* (New York: 1964). *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971), 55.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>128</sup> The most specific example of Bookchin's application of Ecological Materialism can be found in *Our Synthetic Environment*, where Bookchin traced such environmental problems as the increase in cancer rates, soil erosion, water pollution, disease epidemics, and fauna extinctions to the corporate production of food. Lewis Herber (Murray Bookchin), *Our Synthetic Environment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962). 1-32.



later became fundamental to the latter's internal logic. It categorized all human-caused environmental phenomena as an unintended, yet unavoidable, consequence of the process of industrial production.

For example, the production of a car first required the extraction of iron ore. The ore had to be refined and combined with other metals to create steel. Once the raw steel was produced, a car manufacturer had to use electricity to power the machines that shaped the steel into the individual components of the car. The electricity used in the car's synthesis was generated at a power plant that burnt coal or oil to produce it. Finally, the finished commodity, once purchased by a consumer, required gasoline to run. Each stage in the car's production produced a chain reaction of environmental consequences. The mining and drilling methods used to obtain iron ore, coal, and oil each produced a certain level of pollution and waste. The process by which steel was synthesized released more pollutants into the environment, as did the process of generating electricity. These steps in the manufacturing process led to both micro and macro consequences. At the micro level, pollutants released by mining and steel production could spoil a stream or contribute to smog in an urban center. On a macro level, toxins and pollutants released into the atmosphere or water supply could affect climate, health, and disease. Following the logic of Ecological Materialism, all of these environmental consequences could be traced back to the simple consumerist desire to purchase a car.

Social Ecology expanded on this prototypical application of Ecological Materialism by "de-isolating" separate modes of production, and interconnecting all of them in the macro process Bookchin called "urbanization." While Bookchin's earlier critiques recognized the interrelationship between the production of a car and the production of electricity, they isolated an automotive plant from a factory that churned out kitchen appliances. Bookchin began with

piecemeal critiques that focused on a single segment of the economy. For example, *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962) focused on the ecological consequences of agricultural production. Later, Bookchin attempted to trace the total ecological impact of urban industrial centers. *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965), Bookchin's second book, expanded the vantage point of his critique from the level of the factory floor to the level of city and region, and even to the level of the nation-state.<sup>129</sup> As opposed to *Our Synthetic Environment*, *Crisis in Our Cities* used the complex, holistic outlook that Social Ecology attempted to achieve.<sup>130</sup> *Crisis in Our Cities* recognized that urbanization, which Bookchin defined as the totality of industrial output, the centralized population required to man industry, the infrastructure that supported a plethora of factories, the travel networks that connected a city to raw materials and markets, and the vast array of agricultural satellites that supported urban centers, itself was a consequence of capitalist production. In addition it produced a cavalcade of unintended and unforeseen environmental consequences.<sup>131</sup>

The foundations of Bookchin's Ecological Materialism traced back to Karl Marx's earliest writings, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, which were republished in English in 1932, when Bookchin was eleven-years-old. In particular, Bookchin latched onto Marx's argument that the capitalist mode of production obscured and distorted the relationship between things that naturally belonged together. The classical Marxian concept of alienation focused on the estrangement of a laborer from the commodity he or she produced. In a factory where each worker possessed knowledge of only a single step in the production process, he or she could not recognize the finished product as a result of his or her labor. Bookchin, however,

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<sup>129</sup> Lewis Herber (Murray Bookchin), *Crisis in Our Cities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965), 1-22.

<sup>130</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 28.

<sup>131</sup> Bookchin, *Crisis in Our Cities*, 1-22. Also see, Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 67.

extended Marxian alienation to an even more fundamental level, arguing that the process of production distorted the relationships between man and nature. In the same fashion that Marx described the dehumanization and commodification of the working class, in terms of alienation, Bookchin described the despoliation and commodification of nature. “Just as men are converted into commodities,” Bookchin wrote in his essay “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought” (1964), “so every aspect of nature is converted into a commodity, a resource to be manufactured and merchandised wantonly.”<sup>132</sup>

The second component of Ecological Materialism came from far less remote origins. It represented a direct transplantation of Josef Weber’s fourth thesis, that capitalist modes of production tended to develop ecologically self-destructive habits, into Bookchin’s exegesis of Marxian alienation.<sup>133</sup> In the most developed industrial nations, like the United States, where large segments of the industrial economy had been converted to the production of “frivolous consumer goods,” Bookchin argued that the allure of profit clouded the long term ramifications of endless growth to consumption.<sup>134</sup> “Waste” and “parasitism” entered Bookchin’s critique as the result of a dominant cultural attitude that conceived of the planet “as a lump of minerals [that] can support the mindless increases in the production of trash.”<sup>135</sup> Humankind’s estrangement from the natural world clouded the destructive impact of nature’s commoditization.<sup>136</sup>

### Scarcity and Hierarchical Domination

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<sup>132</sup> Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” 63.

<sup>133</sup> A summary of Josef Weber’s eight theses is provided on pages 17-18 of chapter one, “The Old Left and the Origins of Social Ecology (1921-1959)”.

<sup>134</sup> Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” 63.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>136</sup> The influence of Edward Hyams and Charles Elton was also tangibly present in Ecological Materialism. Bookchin turned to them often. However, Marx and Weber formed the theoretical skeleton of Bookchin’s ideas and he regarded Hyams and Elton as supplements rather than theoretical guideposts. Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 66.

In its broadest sense, Bookchin used the term scarcity to refer to a historical material reality and the cultural attitude that reality produced. Human competition and hierarchical centralization, Bookchin, argued, were both born out of necessity, as an adaptation to scarcity. Further, competition and hegemony reinforced the conditioned attitudes produced by scarce resources. This sort of circular analysis, that competition created capitalism and in turn capitalism reinforced the competitive nature, came directly from an early twentieth century German school of Marxian thought best exemplified by Georg Lukacs, which Bookchin most likely encountered through Josef Weber.<sup>137</sup> Lukacs held that human society could not move beyond capitalism because it was stuck in a logical loop where the bourgeois virtue of free competition justified the practice of capitalism and the process of production reinforced bourgeois virtues within the proletariat and disallowed workers to achieve class consciousness.<sup>138</sup> The logical loop Lukacs described further entrenched the power of the status quo.<sup>139</sup> Bookchin applied this model to his analysis and used it to explain the origins of capitalism. Bookchin's model argued that competition over scarce resources compelled societies to integrate all systems of organization into increasingly efficient forms of production, from barbarism to despotism, monarchy, feudalism, mercantilism, and finally capitalism, because the centralization of power in the hands of a few elites was a convenient mode of competition.

Whereas Karl Marx argued that class struggle drove the dialectics of history and capitalism, Bookchin claimed that scarcity, a historical force that Marx failed to identify, in fact drove class struggle.<sup>140</sup> In effect, by identifying scarcity as a driving force behind history,

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 47. Also See, Josef Weber, "The Great Utopia," 12.

<sup>138</sup> Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1972), 23-54. Originally published in 1923.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 23-54.

<sup>140</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 178.

Bookchin believed that he had transcended Marx's dialectic of capitalism.<sup>141</sup> Scarcity, according to Bookchin, explained why class struggle failed to produce revolution and the end of capitalism. From the perspective of Social Ecology, class struggle and the capitalist political economy were consequences of scarcity. The two were components of the social consciousness produced by competition over limited resources. Capitalism formed the most efficient reaction to the reality of limited resources. It was an economic strategy employed out of historical necessity. Bookchin held, however, that history was arriving to a point, where centralized forms of government and economy were no longer necessary because of the development of highly productive "liberatory" technology, and the end of capitalism would also produce the end of class struggle.<sup>142</sup>

Classical Marxism, according to Bookchin, attempted to cure only a single symptom of the great "historical problem," rather than tackling the source of the human will to dominate other humans.<sup>143</sup> According to Bookchin the idea that Marx, writing in the nineteenth century, could "foresee the entire dialectic of capitalism [was], on the face of it, utterly preposterous."<sup>144</sup> Marx's philosophy itself was a product of an age of material scarcity. Marx attempted to discern the historical progression of capitalism, Bookchin contended, at a time when the most advanced industrial technology "barely used electrical power."<sup>145</sup> Therefore, he could not have possibly foreseen humanity's rapid technological advance and the sheer productive potential of these advances. Writing at a time when capitalism resembled Marx's *laissez-faire* model of competition, continued Bookchin, the master could not have foreseen that the political economy would incorporate aspects of socialism and employ derivations of a state controlled or regulated

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 178.

economy.<sup>146</sup> The errors within the Marxist hermeneutic emanated from the philosophy's inability to transcend a "zero-sum" outlook: that the world contained a finite amount of acquirable wealth. Within Marxist exegesis, scarcity remained an immutable fact; therefore Marx's criticism focused on a battle between those who owned the means of production and workers to achieve an equitable distribution of limited resources. Marx never recognized, however, that scarcity itself could be overcome by advanced technology. In Bookchin's estimation, Marx never imagined a future where industrial progress could transcend the historical necessity of competition.<sup>147</sup>

Marx's emphasis on class struggle posed one further problem for Bookchin. It made no effort to end the cycle of hierarchical society and domination. Classical Marxism's vision of utopia, Bookchin contended, remained organized under the construct of a centralized government. Marx contended that the enemy of the proletariat was the bourgeois state, designed to guarantee control of the means of production by the investing classes. His remedy to this problem was a proletariat state, where the working classes wrested control of the means of production from the bourgeoisie. Bookchin argued, however, that no segment of society could be trusted with centralized power and that the accumulation of power within the dictatorship of the proletariat simply replaced one set of elites with another. From the perspective of Social Ecology, the state itself posed the greatest barrier to egalitarian and ecologically sound social organization.

Both Josef Weber and Murray Bookchin employed the term scarcity, although Bookchin ultimately developed a far more intricate definition and application of the term. In both cases,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 184. It is likely that Bookchin took his definition of "socialism," from Lenin's contributions to Revolutionary Marxism, as a Marx discussed few tangible political alternatives to the bourgeois state other than the dictatorship of the proletariat.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 185. Again, it is unclear from Bookchin's writings whether he derived his interpretation of class struggle from Classical Marxism or Marxist-Leninism.

their use of the term likely emanated from the work of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British scholar, Thomas Malthus. Malthus' famous thesis from "An Essay on the Principle of Population," published in 1798, argued that human population would eventually outstrip the limits of available resources. He based this conclusion on the mathematical principle that population grew exponentially while the growth of the food supply multiplied merely arithmetically. Interestingly, Karl Marx was amongst the few nineteenth century critics of Malthus. In *Das Kapital*, Marx dismissed carrying capacity on the grounds that he believed Malthus' essay was merely a conservative attempt to explain the French Revolution and to negate the motivational power of class struggle. Bookchin's at least tacit acceptance of Malthusian Theory (of course modified for Bookchin's own purposes) provided one of the few examples where Bookchin knowingly disagreed with Marx.<sup>148</sup>

Carrying capacity, however, enjoyed a renewed vogue after the end of World War I, particularly in the field of economics. John Maynard Keynes' famous book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), applied Malthus' thesis in an attempt to explain the origins of World War I. Competing over scarce resources, Europe went to war to resolve an economically and politically unsustainable prewar climate.<sup>149</sup> Following Keynes, Neo-Malthusianism – the reapplication and modification of carrying capacity – emerged as a powerful force in early twentieth century academic discourse, and it was a presence of which both Bookchin and Weber

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 177-181. It is worthwhile to restate that Murray Bookchin never really departed from the orbit of Karl Marx's influence. The nineteenth century theorist remained one of the principle influences throughout Bookchin's life. He never envisioned Social Ecology as being contradictory to Marx, because he regarded Classical Marxism as a theory to be revised and expanded upon rather than dismissed. In his critiques of Marx, Bookchin almost always described the errors or "shortsightedness" of Marx's contributions as a function of the time period in which they were produced, rather than a product of a logical error. Even in essays where Bookchin was the most critical of Marx, such as "Listen! Marxist!," he praised Marx for providing the "starting point" where an honest revolutionary could "begin to develop a coherent outlook" on how the world functioned. Bookchin's disagreement with Marx concerning the applicability of Malthus' thesis, however, was one of the few points where Bookchin quarreled with Marx over content rather than context.

<sup>149</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Wilder Publications, 2011), 9-26.

were undoubtedly aware. At least closeted Neo-Malthusians in their own rights, Bookchin and Weber took carrying capacity and adapted it to their own work using the label scarcity. For all practical intents and purposes, the Weberian definition of scarcity paralleled the Neo-Malthusian definition of carrying capacity. Both terms referred to a limited supply of resources for which an exponentially growing human population competed. Both theorists viewed scarcity as a material condition that could be overcome. Moreover, both agreed that the world order, as it existed in the middle of the twentieth century, prevented an end to scarcity, because the vast majority of the world's resources were consumed by a small minority of the world's population.

Bookchin's definition of scarcity ultimately departed from Weber's in one important way. Both Weber and Bookchin agreed that scarcity was a historical reality that humans could eventually overcome through technological progress and political reform.<sup>150</sup> Bookchin and Weber also held that scarcity was the source of humankind's competitive "instinct." Therefore, only "the absolute negation of all hierarchical forms" could end material want for the vast majority of the world.<sup>151</sup> Both theorists thought that the technologically advanced stages of capitalism brought humanity to a point where centralization and statism were no longer necessary.<sup>152</sup> Bookchin departed from Weber, however, in that he believed that human beings could actually transcend the competitive instincts nurtured through eons of history and social evolution.

Weber died deeply pessimistic, believing that humanity would never be convinced to abandon its "fetish" for the centralized state because scarcity and competition were too

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<sup>150</sup> Van der Linden, "Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," 139.

<sup>151</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 40.

<sup>152</sup> Van der Linden, "Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," 138.



entrenched.<sup>153</sup> Weber argued that revolutionaries sabotaged their own efforts by mimicking bourgeois forms of organization. This, he maintained, underlay the failure of Soviet Communism, under which the Party simply replaced bourgeois elites. One power structure supplanted another, and both manipulated the means of production for their own ends. According to Weber, Lenin's definition of socialism became indistinguishable from state capitalism in its purest form. It amounted to a controlled economy manipulated solely for the benefit of the Soviet elite.<sup>154</sup> Bookchin agreed wholeheartedly with Weber's glum appraisal of the results of the Russian Revolution; however, he disagreed with Weber's point that statism was a "fetish" that revolutionaries could not overcome.<sup>155</sup> The full importance of Bookchin's departure from Weber will be explained at greater length later in the next chapter.

### The Revolutionary Estate of Ecology

Weber's fifth thesis argued that capitalism co-opted the revolutionary aspects of traditional sciences and philosophies. As time progressed, the capitalist political economy adapted and absorbed challenges to its authority. Bookchin accepted Weber's thesis and incorporated it into Social Ecology with one important exception. According to Bookchin capitalist society could not subjugate ecology and its revolutionary position without destroying itself. If the environmental consequences of capitalism went ignored, then ecological despoliation would create fatal problems for human society.

Like Weber, Bookchin's exegesis argued that, over time, all revolutionary ideas became rebranded and fit conveniently within the bourgeoisie's system of acceptable knowledge. Observing the twentieth century political economy of Europe and the United States, Bookchin

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>154</sup> Josef Weber, "The Great Utopia," 3-22.

<sup>155</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 184.

argued that technologically advanced industrial capitalism successfully adapted to meet challenges posed by science and philosophy. This included elements of a planned economy, allowed workers to unionize, willingly raised the workers' standard of living, allowed workers to enjoy the same consumptive power as the petty bourgeoisie, and even replaced the working class with cybernation, while maintaining "legitimate" power for a small group of elites.<sup>156</sup> Modern industrial capitalism disarmed the revolutionary implications of traditional sciences and philosophies.

The single greatest challenge to bourgeois society, Bookchin argued, came in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Bookchin, a two pronged attack, from both the sciences and philosophy, spearheaded by Karl Marx and Charles Darwin, Bookchin argued, "assailed the very pillars that held the capitalist hegemony in place."<sup>157</sup> Bookchin held that Marx's masterwork *Das Kapital*, published in 1867, unearthed the truth of industrial capitalism and its heinous ramifications for a vast majority of the world's population. It exposed the plot of a small cadre of elites to grow immensely wealthy off of the labor of the majority. As Bookchin understood it, Marx wrote with the intent to foment rebellion and prompt the working classes to smash their oppressors. Eight years before the publication of *Das Kapital*, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* undercut the authority of Europe's Christian Church, the primary cultural instrument of bourgeois control. The Church, according to Marx, placated the working class, promising a paradise beyond death for subservience in life. Darwin, however, undermined the authority of the church by constructing an explanation for life that did not require the presence of an omnipotent

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 57.

God. Furthermore, the sheer chance, and random selection which Darwin found often present in the process of evolution seemingly cast doubt on the existence of any God.<sup>158</sup>

Capitalism, Bookchin argued, survived this attack. Worse, the political economy absorbed Marxism and Darwinism. The Bourgeoisie accepted atheism, jettisoned the church as a source of authority, and turned to science as “an instrument of control over the thought processes and physical being of [humans].”<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, Marx’s treatises, which he intended as manuals for revolutionaries, also served the capitalist power structure as an instructional guide on how to avoid revolution. Minimum wages, workers unions, and state regulations that protected workers and limited their hours served to prevent the class struggle between the working class and the upper classes from boiling over into class war.<sup>160</sup>

The problem with the traditional sciences and philosophies of the nineteenth century was that their subversive elements attacked the status quo in theoretical space. They attacked accepted systems of knowledge and morality that justified the power of elites over the lower classes. They attacked a system that pushed the working class into poverty but assumed that, biologically, human life would endure, even in a state of degradation. “The critical edge of ecology,” Bookchin argued, however, derived from the nature of the science.<sup>161</sup>

The issues with which ecology deals are imperishable in the sense that they cannot be ignored without bringing into question the survival of man and the survival of the planet itself.<sup>162</sup>

The subversive impulse within ecology, Bookchin argued, presented the current status quo with quantifiable, physical evidence of its own self-destruction.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 216-217.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 59.

[Ecology] clearly shows that the totality of the natural world – nature viewed in all its aspects, cycles and interrelationships – cancels out all human pretensions to mastery over the planet. The great wastelands of the Mediterranean basin, once areas of thriving agriculture or a rich natural flora, are historic evidence of nature’s revenge against human parasitism... [M]an could be described as a highly destructive parasite who threatens to destroy his host – the natural world – and eventually himself.<sup>163</sup>

Furthermore, Bookchin posited that the science of ecology presented an implicit ultimatum to the present political economy and to the economic dominance of the United States and Western Europe: reform or ultimately perish.

#### The Imperative for a New Revolutionary Outlook

Writ large, the critical model Bookchin established in Social Ecology maintained that technologically advanced societies in Europe and North America, as they existed in the 1950s and the 1960s, stood at a threshold between hierarchical social forms based on the Neo-Malthusian principle of scarcity or egalitarian social organization based on technology of material abundance.<sup>164</sup> The planet, Bookchin posited, could not sustain the present model of human social organization.

Pointing to the work of Charles Elton, a British ecologist, Bookchin argued his case from the “ecological principle of diversity.”<sup>165</sup> Elton observed that the most stable and sustainable ecosystems achieved a wide diversity of plant and animal life. Elton cited Ernst Mayr, who claimed that natural selection tended to produce a wide diversity of plant and animal life to create stable ecosystems that responded flexibly to sudden environmental changes. Elton argued that, in a given ecosystem, where a wide variety of predators, prey, and food sources existed

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 85-139. Bookchin described the threshold between the reality of scarcity, where want and need were perpetuated by capitalism’s patterns of overconsumption, and the potential of future abundance in a 1965 article entitled “Toward A Liberatory Technology.” In the article Bookchin argued that the industrial technology used to satisfy consumerist desires in the United States and Western Europe could be re-employed to provide basic material necessities for the entire world’s population. The article was republished in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 70.

species' populations tended to stabilize. This meant that prey species could graze off of a variety of vegetation without stressing any single form of plant life to the point of extinction. In turn, predatory species managed the populations of prey species and prevented over grazing. An explosive increase in population for a single species within the system, however, contributed to ecological failure, as this large population began to deplete the resources it used for sustenance. Furthermore, Elton observed, relatively uniform ecosystems lacked sufficient natural spontaneity to adapt successfully to sudden climatic shifts brought on by natural disasters or other sources.<sup>166</sup>

Bookchin applied Elton's model to his critique of hierarchical social organization. Bookchin argued that, before the historical emergence of capitalism, industrialization, and the nation-state preindustrial societies developed diverse economies tailored to the material limitations of their environment (Bookchin was, apparently, unaware of anthropological research produced on the failed tribal society located on Easter Island). Even preindustrial Europe, Bookchin argued, had developed diverse regional economies. Over time, countless regions became integrated into a handful of monolithic industrial economies. At the same time, regional principalities consolidated into centrally controlled nation states.

The Industrial Revolution overwhelmed and largely destroyed these regional [economic] patterns...many regions became predominantly mining areas, devoted to the extraction of a single resource, while others were turned into immense industrial areas, often devoted to the production of a few commodities.<sup>167</sup>

Capitalism tended to organize the environment based on an impulse for efficiency, or as

Bookchin saw it, as an efficient response to scarcity. Thus, urbanization and industrialization

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<sup>166</sup> The Punctuated Equilibrium Thesis is an addendum to the theory of evolution by natural selection. It argues that the process of macro evolution eventually slows down as the environment achieves a diverse and stable distribution of life. Sudden environmental changes, however, touch off rapid new rounds of speciation. The term Punctuated Equilibrium was coined in 1972. Its origins go back to the work of Ernst Mayr, who published his genetic findings supporting Punctuated Equilibrium in 1954. Charles S. Elton, *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants* (London: Methuen Books, 1958), 190-196.

<sup>167</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 73.

destroyed complex and diverse ecosystems to achieve an ecosystem based on a single model of production: urban-industrial regions, mining regions, logging regions, agricultural regions, and so forth. The uniform ecosystems created by industrial urbanization, Bookchin argued, made this entire pattern of human social organization extremely vulnerable to sudden climatic changes. New York City depended upon farms in the Midwest for food. Midwestern farmers depended upon oil from Oklahoma, and the Oklahoman oil fields required manufactured goods from Pittsburgh. Under this cross regional model, a disruption in any single region affected the entire system.<sup>168</sup>

The statist model of industrial urbanization had to be removed, Bookchin argued, not only because of its ecological unsustainability, but because the existing order held a future utopia at bay.<sup>169</sup> In the Western World, capitalism had produced a level of technological advancement that potentially could allow society to escape the Malthusian scenario of overpopulation and competition over scarce resources.<sup>170</sup> Bookchin reasoned, however, that while the technological possibility of a world without want and need had been “borne into existence,” the “archaic” and “decrepit” system in control would have to be destroyed to unleash this potentially “liberatory” technology.<sup>171</sup> As long as the productive potential of capitalism was “bound in its urban prison”

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<sup>168</sup> Murray Bookchin gave a detailed critique of industrial agriculture in his 1962 book, *Our Synthetic Environment*, in which he attempted to extrapolate the potential consequences of prolonged reliance on chemical pesticides, specifically DDT. In the book, he argued that the destruction of diversity in agricultural regions, primarily wiping out insect populations without full cognizance of the interrelationship between the health in plant species and insect species, threatened the environmental stability of the system. Furthermore, he argued that the use of such chemicals could have disastrous effects on human health through their presence in food and by leaking into the watershed. Lewis Herber (Murray Bookchin), *Our Synthetic Environment* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962). Although Bookchin’s work predated Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* by 6 months, he praised Carson’s book as an honest appeal for a new, sustainable, agricultural model. See Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 66.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 81

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-112.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

and employed to meet the “frivolous” and “wasteful” desires of the West’s consumer economies, material scarcity would continue.<sup>172</sup>

Social Ecology called for the reorganization of society along both egalitarian and ecologically sound principles.<sup>173</sup> Once again employing Charles Elton’s principle of ecological sustainability through regional environmental diversity, Bookchin argued that social and economic patterns would have to return to a model that more closely resembled preindustrial society.<sup>174</sup> Decentralization of the economy, Bookchin argued, would allow communities to develop energy and production patterns tailored to the ecological realities of the environment. Bookchin argued that the modern urban center would necessarily have to be abandoned because the ecological cost of its maintenance could not be sustained. Furthermore, the urban center – as product of the industrial revolution – was antithetical to a regionalized model of community life.<sup>175</sup> Decentralized economic communities, Bookchin argued, would require small scale governments. Moving away from the Communist model of a centralized state governed by the proletariat, Bookchin turned to the Anarchist model of the “Mir,” or village, as the highest level of government. He argued that smaller government units gave individuals greater influence in the policies that directly affected them.<sup>176</sup> Whereas centralized economic interests utilized industrial infrastructure for the mass production of a few commodities based on the speculation of their

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 136-139.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>176</sup> The concept of the “Mir,” a Russian word for village, comes from Mikael Bakunin, a Russian anarchist theorist of the nineteenth century. Bookchin argued that under modern conditions, the anarchist model of utopia, espoused by Bakunin in *Statism and Anarchy* held more applicability for twentieth century than the Marxist utopia. Bookchin’s interpretation and application of Bakunin, however, was highly irregular. Bookchin attempted to fuse elements of Bakunin’s version of anarchism with Marx’s vision for communism. Rather than reject Marx in favor of Bakunin. The full significance of Bakunin’s influence on Bookchin will be explained in the next chapter, because anarchist influences played a larger role in shaping Bookchin’s alternative to capitalism than shaping his critique. Ibid., 78.

marketability, Bookchin argued that decentralized production could be tailored to meet the total material needs of a regional population.<sup>177</sup>

Bookchin further contended that under the existing order, the ecological situation worldwide would deteriorate to the point that the revolution which Social Ecology called for would become essential for survival.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, as the environment continued to deteriorate, his proposed alternative would become not only attractive, but absolutely necessary.<sup>179</sup> *State and Revolution*, a book written by Vladimir Lenin and published in 1917, a book which Bookchin would have been eminently familiar with from his childhood, chronicled how Lenin, who possessed with only a handful of apostles at the turn of the twentieth century, accumulated a large enough following to topple the Tsarist regime a mere decade later. Lenin concluded that a “visionary” leader need only wait for the necessary moment, when life under the present system became so intolerable that thousands would come to embrace the revolutionary alternative. Bookchin likely viewed himself in a similar light, as a visionary whose time would inevitably come. In the opening of “Listen! Marxist!,” Bookchin claimed that he possessed the alternative to the existing order, and only needed followers to gravitate toward him.<sup>180</sup>

Two primary conclusions, which he derived from Social Ecology, guided Bookchin’s development of a political alternative to the bourgeois state. The first was that this new alternative would have to take an outlook that extend beyond the scope of classical Marxism. The second was that, because the revolutionary impetus of the working class had been co-opted into capitalism, a new revolutionary segment of society would have to be found, one that would

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 57-81.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 57-81.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 173-177.



willingly accept the social reform that Social Ecology prescribed. In doing so, the new revolutionaries would negate the necessity of a violent revolution and a hegemonic revolutionary vanguard. In accord with his first conclusion, Bookchin sought to combine what he perceived as the useful elements of Bakuninian anarchism and classical Marxism. Furthermore, his theoretical project remained under the guidance of the principles of Weberian Trotskyism. In accord with his second conclusion, Bookchin developed a fascination with American youth and alternative culture. In the Beats and later the New Left and the counterculture, Bookchin detected the nascent presence of a revolutionary impulse that he sought to foster: the rejection of material frivolity, a distrust of all authority, and the preference for a decentralized, communal pattern of life.

## Chapter 3

### Post-Scarcity Anarchism (1964-1971)

Murray Bookchin had organized the personal library in his Vermont home, where he resided until his death in 2006, in such a fashion that, as one's eyes scanned from left to right, they viewed the collected works of Hegel, Marx, and then Bookchin himself.<sup>181</sup> This arrangement offers intriguing insight on how Bookchin viewed the importance of his own work. He saw himself as the descendent of an intellectual lineage that emanated from Hegel. More important, he believed that his own theories transcended Classical Marxism in the same manner that Marx overcame the limitations of the Hegelian dialectic. Some truth existed in Bookchin's, albeit generous, self-evaluation of his works' importance. The product of a two decade intellectual journey, which spanned the 1950s and the 1960s, Bookchin's writings, he believed, led him beyond a dogmatic Marxist-Leninist outlook. In Bookchin's mind, he was piecing together a futuristic political ideology, one that embraced secular humanism and fused it with technocratic scientific principle. Such an ideology would produce a post-revolutionary utopia that was a "rational" society where direct democracy and technology would be employed to "meet the needs of all without waste."<sup>182</sup>

On the other hand, the arrangement of Bookchin's library also represented how Bookchin viewed his work in the 2000s rather than in the 1960s. He systematically revisited his older work. Over time Bookchin reformulated his outlook. He smoothed out components of his thought and reworded thinkers who influenced him to make their ideas his own.<sup>183</sup> Intensely argumentative by nature, Bookchin often became increasingly critical of those who influenced

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<sup>181</sup> Peter Staudenmaier to Author: personal interview, February 15, 2011.

<sup>182</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 236.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Staudenmaier to Author: personal interview, February 15, 2011.

him and contemporaries as he gained a better grasp on his own positions as well as those of his intellectual colleagues. Seemingly half of Bookchin's effort was spent in a constant struggle to maintain his intellectual distance from every other theorist on the far left. Thus, the viewpoint that Bookchin imagined in the early 2000s, which saw himself in a direct line of dissent from Marx and Hegel, omitted some key influences and likeminded contemporaries.

Even by the end of the 1960s, Bookchin had not strayed too far from the intellectual orbit of Josef Weber and the *Dinge der Zeit* group. The seventh and eighth theses of Weber's theory called for decentralized revolutionary alternative to Marxist-Leninism and the revolutionary vanguard.<sup>184</sup> The alternative that Weber proposed closely resembled the model that Bookchin developed with Social Ecology. It envisioned a version of direct democracy practiced by small sovereign communities (the Polis) and guided by the technocratic principle of employing each individual according to his or her expertise. In "The Great Utopia" (1950), Weber proposed a system that dismantled all forms of bureaucracy, both political and economic. Weber argued that political parties, labor unions, corporate offices, and all other forms of large-scale organization were to be distrusted.

[B]itter experience has confirmed the belief that all parties are no good! In practice, then, the demand arises that political organization in the traditional sense be destroyed.<sup>185</sup>

In "The Campaign Against Remilitarization in Germany" (1956), Weber further contended:

[The Polis' should not be regarded] an institution of the state but an assembly of citizens with equal rights who come voluntarily together for common deliberation, everybody speaks as it is given to him and how he pleases. Everybody places freely at the disposal of the assembly what he has to offer of knowledge, advice, experience, proposals, critiques, ideas, etc.; the assembly

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<sup>184</sup> Weber's eight theses are summarized in Chapter 1, "The Old Left and the Origins of Social Ecology," 17-18.

<sup>185</sup> Weber, "The Great Utopia," 16.

discusses all of it, deliberates in the eye of the public and decides on acceptance or refusal.<sup>186</sup>

Posthumously published theoretical works attributed to Weber (Marcel Van Der Linden confirmed in 2001 that these articles were, in fact, written by Weber) further demonstrated that Weber's theoretical political model included environmental considerations.<sup>187</sup>

[I]ntimately connected with [an alternative system to capitalism] is the preservation of our resources, the repair of the damage done, the restoration of healthful conditions of life (literally the detoxification of our environment) and production on an enlarged basis.<sup>188</sup>

Already present in Josef Weber's work were two fundamental building blocks of Post-Scarcity Anarchism, the political praxis of Social Ecology. First, Weber's political criticism contained a "libertarian impulse." That is, although Weber self-identified as a Trotskyist and remained committed to communal models of social organization, wherein "each gave according to his or her means and received according to his or her needs," he turned also to models of decentralized social life in order to mitigate the practical problems posed by Bolshevism and the revolutionary vanguard. Weber became distrustful of all political parties, including any sort of communist party. Second, Weber argued that a new post-revolutionary society would be a "rational" society that sustainably managed and extracted resources and eradicated "human parasitism."<sup>189</sup>

These two fundamental components of Weber's program found their way into Post-Scarcity Anarchism. When Ramparts Press, a left wing publishing house located in Berkeley, California, first published *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* in 1971, Bookchin fully recognized the

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<sup>186</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "The Campaign Against Remilitarization in Germany," *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 7, No. 23 (New York: Spring 1956), 209-210.

<sup>187</sup> Marcel Van Der Linden, "The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2001), 142.

<sup>188</sup> [Josef Weber], "A World Plan for the Solution of Modern Society's Economic and Social Crisis," *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 41 (New York: Summer 1961), 33-34.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

importance of Weber's contributions to the revolutionary program that Bookchin's anthology articulated.

The dedication of [*Post-Scarcity Anarchism*] to Josef Weber and Allan Hoffman is more than a sentimental gesture to two of my closest comrades. Josef Weber, a German revolutionary who died in 1958 [sic] at the age of fifty-eight, formulated more than twenty years ago the outlines of the utopian project developed in this book. Moreover, for me he was a living link with all that was vital and libertarian in the great intellectual tradition of German socialism in the pre-Leninist Era.<sup>190</sup>

Over time, the clear link that had existed between Post-Scarcity Anarchism and Josef Weber's libertarian Trotskyism became clouded in Bookchin's mind. This was largely a function of the systematic reappraisals Bookchin made of his own thought, as well as his tendency to often re-label his political and theoretical positions.

He first evaluated the practical use of anarchist philosophies in the mid-sixties. In a version of "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" reprinted in 1966, Bookchin praised the appeal of anarchism's "libertarian qualities." Yet, what he described as the "libertarian core" of anarchist philosophy, "a stateless, decentralized society, based on the communal ownership of the means of production," differed little from Weber's vision.<sup>191</sup> In the sixties and early seventies Bookchin himself seemed uncertain about just how anarchistic his criticism of capitalism and proposed alternative was. Bookchin continued to use "Libertarian Socialism," a political label he developed for himself in the 1950s, to describe his politics throughout the 1960s.<sup>192</sup> Only in the late 1970s did Bookchin embrace anarchism completely as a label for his ideological set.<sup>193</sup> The

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<sup>190</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 30. Allan Hoffman, the other individual to whom Bookchin dedicated this book was a twenty-eight year old member of the California commune movement, which intersected Social Ecology and the Counter Culture. Hoffman died in a truck accident in 1971. Weber actually died in 1959. The error in Bookchin's dedication was either a typo or a mental slip.

<sup>191</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Anarchy*, Vol. 6, No. 69 (Spring, 1966), 18.

<sup>192</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*,

<sup>193</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Marxism as Bourgeois Sociology," *Comment: New Perspectives in Libertarian Thought* (Winter, 1979), 32.

initial difficulties that Bookchin faced in categorizing his own ideas spoke to the striking similarities that post-Stalinist Marxism had developed with classical anarchism.

During the nineteenth century, the differences between Marxist ideologies and anarchist ideologies were often defined in terms of their proposed alternatives to the European capitalist status quo, because both ideological sets fundamentally agreed that capitalism was the primary evil in the world and that it needed to be eradicated. The Marxist utopia still utilized the centralized nation-state as its basic model of social organization. On the other hand, anarchist utopias dissolved centralized states and made small scale communities of one type or another their basic unit of social organization. During the twentieth century, and particularly after the outbreak of the Cold War, the aforementioned distinction between Marxists and anarchists became less defined as hundreds of socialists and communists in the United States and Western Europe began to critique Bolshevism from the left, and in doing so, they also began to style their utopias around a decentralized social model.

This explains how Josef Weber's utopian project, which influenced *Dinge der Zeit* and Murray Bookchin, could propose decentralized directly democratic means of political organization without anarchist influence. Weber's utopia was a critique of Bolshevism from within the intellectual sphere of revolutionary Marxism.<sup>194</sup> From Weber's viewpoint, the Communist Party was the hegemonic force that prevented the Soviet Union from realizing true egalitarian communalism. The politburo represented a new set of party elites that simply replaced the old tsarist elites. The Bolsheviks' goal of modernizing and industrializing the Soviet Union at all costs was responsible for millions of deaths, the continued degradation of industrial

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<sup>194</sup> Weber, "The Great Utopia," 3-22.

workers, and the ecological destruction of the Ukrainian steppe, the Caucasus, and the Urals.<sup>195</sup>

This led Weber to conclude that the Soviet Union, was in fact no closer to realizing utopian society than the United States.<sup>196</sup> This conclusion, Weber believed, forced Marxists to embrace a revolutionary ideology that eschewed all forms of centralization and hierarchy.

Social Ecology also critiqued Bolshevism from within the intellectual sphere of revolutionary Marxism. It provided a materialist critique of capitalism that also countered Soviet communism. Why, then, did Murray Bookchin chose to label Social Ecology's political application anarchism? Decentralized directly democratic political methods did not necessarily differentiate Weberian socialism from anarchism. Therefore, the question remains, what was anarchist about Post-Scarcity Anarchism? In order to understand fully the subtle differences between Weber and Bookchin's work, one must arrive at a comprehensive answer to that question. The anarchistic elements of Murray Bookchin's work set him apart from Weber and the rest of the *Dinge der Zeit* group. Furthermore, as Bookchin began to view himself as an anarchist rather than a "Libertarian Socialist," he eventually became more critical of Weber and less cognizant of the essential nature of Weber's influence.

#### Who Are the Revolutionaries?

The foundation of Bookchin's work derived from Weber's eight theoretical points, with one significant exception. Bookchin fully accepted Weber's first two points that the failure of the workers movement to produce a revolution allowed capitalism to survive the cataclysm predicted by Marx and pacify the working class by co-opting it into consumerism. The system provided unionization, collective bargaining, minimum wage, maximum hours, unemployment insurance,

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 3-22.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 3-22.

and publicly funded retirement.<sup>197</sup> Bookchin also fully accepted Weber's third and fourth points, that capitalism devolved and re-expressed early social forms that it had integrated during its development, such as slave societies, feudal societies, and mercantilist societies, and that, in doing so, developed ecologically destructive tendencies.<sup>198</sup> For example, the sharecropping system in the American South during the twentieth century, from Bookchin's point of view, showed a re-expression of feudal forms of organization. Though African-American sharecroppers were by no means bound to the land they worked, as was the case with European serfs, economic devices such as debt discouraged sharecroppers from leaving their allotted plots. Further, sharecropping contributed to the ecological problem of soil exhaustion caused by overuse and obsolete agricultural methods.<sup>199</sup> Bookchin further accepted Weber's sixth, seventh, and eighth points that the advanced stages of capitalism achieved in the United States and Western Europe had produced technology with enough productive potential to eradicate material privation. This could be achieved only if the productive capacity of this "liberatory" technology became unhinged from the capitalist hegemony that controlled it and was placed under the care of myriad communal assemblies governed by directly democratic methods.<sup>200</sup> Bookchin partially quarreled, however, with Weber's fifth point, that capitalism caused a general decline in cultural achievement because it pacified the revolutionary implications of philosophy and science. Bookchin accepted Weber's assertion, but with one exception. Ecology, he maintained, was unaffected by this general cultural decline and could "yet restore and even transcend the liberatory estate of the traditional sciences and philosophies."<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 181-192.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-82.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-220.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.



This seemingly insignificant exception Bookchin made for only one component of Josef Weber's work was actually a clue to a far greater fundamental difference between Weberian socialism and Post-Scarcity Anarchism. This was a point that Marcel Van Der Linden neglected in "The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism" (2001). Van Der Linden correctly noted the marked similarities between Weber's work and Social Ecology.<sup>202</sup> He further noted the remarkable influence that Weber exerted over Bookchin.<sup>203</sup> In concluding that Bookchin departed from Weber over only one issue, however, Van Der Linden diminished the significance of Bookchin's deviation.<sup>204</sup> Van Der Linden recognized that the exceptional status Bookchin afforded ecology enabled him to escape Weber's pessimistic appraisal of the world situation.<sup>205</sup> The major point that Van Der Linden missed, however, was an investigation of why Bookchin chose to quarrel with one very specific part of Weber's theory. What was unique about Bookchin's outlook that guided him to make such a specific critique of Weber?

Bookchin first discussed ecology's exclusion from Weber's fifth thesis in "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought (1964)," published five years after Weber's death.<sup>206</sup> In that same essay, Bookchin also first expressed his interest in the practical application of classical anarchism in the final section of that essay, titled "Observations on Classical Anarchism and Modern Ecology."<sup>207</sup> This section contained an important feature. In "Observations on Classical Anarchism and Modern Ecology" Bookchin first posited that classical anarchist theory could potentially provide

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<sup>202</sup> Van Der Linden, "The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism," 132.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>206</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Comment* [Independent Pamphlet] (Fall 1964) 3-7. Bookchin presented his argument for why ecology was exempted from Weber's fifth thesis in the section entitled "The Critical Edge of Ecology."

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 15-19.

a revolutionary “alternative” to the class based model of Marxist revolution.<sup>208</sup> This was an important conclusion for Bookchin to draw, because according to Weber’s second thesis, with which Bookchin agreed, when capitalism co-opted the working class, Marx’s dialectic effectively reached a “dead end.”

Weber’s second thesis informed the ultimately pessimistic tone of his political outlook. Although Weber concluded that the proletariat was not the revolutionary “vanguard” class and the segment of society that would carry humanity to socialism and communism, he could not escape a class-based outlook. For a time, Weber pursued an alternative that drew upon a “United Front” model which proposed to organize bohemians, academics, students, “unemployables,” and other various subcultures alienated by capitalism together in a communal model of living that could then be exported to increasingly broad segments of society.<sup>209</sup> Weber abandoned the project once he realized the impossibility of the proposal in practical terms and the relatively nihilistic outlook of the Beatniks and other bohemian groups that made them unlikely participants in any revolutionary cause.<sup>210</sup> After that Weber briefly turned his attention to the Third World, as did many other Marxists of the time, but ultimately rejected the probability of a successful revolution being staged outside of the United States or Western Europe. In Weber’s opinion, Europe and the United States were more “historically prepared” for revolution. He held further that the technological prowess of the industrial First World would have to be liberated first in order to support subsequent revolutions in the developing world.<sup>211</sup> Weber ultimately concluded that the capitalist status quo had become too entrenched to be toppled. The critical

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>209</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), “On the Topic of Germany and World Development,” *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1948), 3-15. Originally Published in German, Josef Weber, “Zum Thema Deutschland und die Weltentwicklung,” *Dinge der Zeit*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Fall 1947).

<sup>210</sup> Weber, “The Great Utopia,” 7.

<sup>211</sup> Weber, “A World Plan,” 30-34.

moment in history, Weber held, where bourgeois hegemony would have come crashing down had already passed and could not be recalled. He based his conclusion on the belief that no segment of society possessed both the general discontent required to engage in open insurrection against the status quo and the power in numbers required to have a hope of defeating the capitalist hegemony.<sup>212</sup>

#### A Nineteenth Century Answer to a Twentieth Century Problem

By critically evaluating classical anarchist theory for anything that could be of use to a twentieth century revolutionary, Murray Bookchin unbound himself from the limits of Marxian class analysis that had stunted Josef Weber's progress. Bookchin examined a number of possibilities. He admired the work of Thomas Meunzer and Max Stirner, two nineteenth century German anarchists; however, he found their views on anarchism too individualistic to be of use to his revolutionary project.<sup>213</sup> Stirner's goal had been to dissolve all forms of social organization by encouraging men and women to find personal philosophical fulfillment. Bookchin also considered Gerrard Winstanley, a prominent British anarchist of the seventeenth century. Winstanley had been a key leader in the Diggers, an agrarian communal movement. Bookchin was initially drawn to Winstanley because of the stress the British anarchist placed on maintaining a "harmonious relationship with nature."<sup>214</sup> Winstanley's eco-centric position appealed to Bookchin, but he decided that the British anarchist's work, which was based upon a struggle for land access between peasants and landed gentry in the seventeenth century, could hardly be reapplied to the United States in the twentieth century.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "The 'Inner Limit' of Capitalism," *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 40 (Spring 1961), 268-302.

<sup>213</sup> Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," 1964 edition, 16.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Next, Bookchin turned to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon a nineteenth century French anarchist. Initially Proudhon's "austere, and almost biblical emphasis," on "discipline" and "duty to the cause" repelled Bookchin, who found Proudhon "among the least libertarian" of classical anarchists.<sup>216</sup> Further examination of the history and influence of Proudhon's work, however, began to yield results for Bookchin. In 1964 he recognized an important feature in the application of Proudhon's ideology during the Paris Commune of 1871. In "Observations on Classical Anarchism and Modern Ecology," Bookchin wrote:

Proudhon, in his own way, probes the very vitals of this context. He speaks directly to the needs of the craftsman, whose world and values are being threatened by the Industrial Revolution. In the background of nearly all his works is the village economy of the Franche-Comte, the memories of Burgille-en-Marnay, and the *tour de France* he made as a journeyman in the printing trade...the fact yet remains that the very Parisians who were to "storm the heavens" in 1830, in 1848, and again in the Commune of 1871 were mainly artisans, not factory workers, and it was these men who were to adhere to Proudhon's doctrines. Again, my point is that the Proudhonian anarchists were men of their times and dealt with the problems from which stemmed most of the social unrest in France—the painful, agonizing destruction of the handicraft workers [by the Industrial Revolution].<sup>217</sup>

In this passage, Bookchin made the first significant theoretical discovery in his project to circumvent the problem posed by Weber's second thesis: the co-opting of the proletariat into capitalism. The members of the Paris Commune, Bookchin argued, were not proletarian laborers rebelling against their exploitation by industrial capitalism. Rather, in Bookchin's view, they were artisans, petty bourgeoisie, fighting to save their means of living. He held further that the revolutionaries of the Paris Commune did not need to be ideologically drilled and disciplined by a "vanguard" or a "party" to be moved to insurrection. The Paris Commune actually provided a

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<sup>216</sup> Bookchin, *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, 90. The chapter, "Toward a Liberatory Technology" was originally published as an article in *Comment* in 1965.

<sup>217</sup> Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Comment*, 1964 edition, 17-18.

counterexample to the Marxist model of revolution.<sup>218</sup> The artisans of the commune, Bookchin argued, latched on to Proudhon's ideology because it spoke to a pre-existing situation and channeled their dissatisfaction with the status quo into revolutionary action.

In studying the Paris Commune and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Bookchin discovered what he called the "spontaneity" of anarchist revolution.<sup>219</sup> Anarchism, Bookchin noted, began with an individual expression of visceral hatred for the society as it existed.<sup>220</sup> Only after this initial reaction, Bookchin held further, did a discontented person seek out likeminded individuals and systematize their world view in accord with an ideology that spoke to his or her immediate needs.<sup>221</sup>

On the basis of this conclusion, Bookchin developed a deep admiration for Mikhail Bakunin, a nineteenth century Russian radical anarchist.<sup>222</sup> Discussing both Bakunin and Proudhon, Bookchin further developed his ideas about the spontaneity of anarchist revolution in "Desire and Need," an essay published in 1967. Bakunin's insistence upon rejecting all forms of authority in order to maintain revolutionary spontaneity attracted Bookchin.

There is an anarchist ethic...basically summarized by Bakunin when he said, 'We cannot admit, even as a revolutionary transition, a so-called revolutionary dictatorship, because when the revolution becomes concentrated in the hands of some individuals, it becomes inevitably and immediately reaction.'<sup>223</sup>

Bookchin argued that historically the great European revolutions began spontaneously and rarely, if ever, originated out of a single class of society.<sup>224</sup> The French Revolution drew initial support from broad range of French society dissatisfied with the monarchy, and the Bolsheviks

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>220</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 87.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>223</sup> Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," 1964 edition, 16.

<sup>224</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 277. The final chapter of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, "Desire and Need," was originally published as a sole issue of *Black Flag* in 1967.

drew their support largely from outside of Russia's minute working class in the October Revolution.<sup>225</sup> These revolutions failed, Bookchin argued, because their leadership largely suppressed the initial fervor that sparked the revolution in order to integrate a wide range of subversives with disparate outlooks into the service a singular ideology.<sup>226</sup> According to Bookchin, however, Bakunin's outlook attempted to conserve that initial spontaneity by maintaining a constant struggle against all forms of centralization.<sup>227</sup> In doing so, Bookchin argued, Bakunin's model encouraged broader cross-class participation in revolutionary activity by integrating all malcontents, regardless of class, into a single revolutionary effort rather than reducing the role of carrying out and maintaining a revolution to a single stratum of society.<sup>228</sup> Such a spontaneous approach, Bookchin argued, gave the anarchism a flexibility that was "severly lacking" in the Marxist tradition.<sup>229</sup>

"[Mikhail] Bakunin becomes more relevant to the realities of our times [than Karl Marx]," Bookchin wrote in 1969.<sup>230</sup> Not bound by the constraints of class struggle, Bookchin argued, anarchism sought to unite all of the various malcontents the status quo produced into a struggle against it.<sup>231</sup> Bookchin further held that the capitalist status quo produced varied forms of discontent other than simple material privation, poverty, and exploitation.<sup>232</sup> Intellectual boredom triggered by the mindless acquisition of meaningless "things," philosophical discontent caused by adherence to the "work ethic" and a life spent "getting ahead," and the stifling of creative expression fostered by the corporate culture of conformity all produced potential

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 277-278.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 214-216.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 274-276.

revolutionaries from disparate strata of society.<sup>233</sup> Anarchism, Bookchin argued, attempted to reach them all.<sup>234</sup>

On the other hand, Bookchin argued, the factory floor, which for a century had been the domain of revolutionary Marxism, had become the ideology's prison.<sup>235</sup> Marxism had sought to insidiously plant itself among the working class by using the organization and discipline drilled into industrial laborers by the process of production to "discipline" the working class in Marxist ideology and "organize" the workers behind a revolutionary vanguard.<sup>236</sup> It replaced the "work ethic" with a "revolutionary ethic."<sup>237</sup> The problem with such a narrow approach, Bookchin held, became apparent only after the spread of prosperity in the United States after World War II. Industrial workers became less likely to accept a "revolutionary ethic" when the "work ethic" brought them relative material comfort.<sup>238</sup> What chance, Bookchin asked, did American Marxists have to gain the support of the proletariat when the American working class was comfortably fed, clothed, housed, and even actively engaged in consumerism?<sup>239</sup> Bookchin's answer was virtually none.

Yet, Bookchin observed, in the 1960s "capitalism visibly antagonize[d] and produce[d] revolutionaries among virtually all strata of society, particularly the young."<sup>240</sup> If any lesson could be extracted from classical anarchism and applied to the twentieth century, Bookchin held, it would be the necessity to adopt a flexible and "spontaneous" revolutionary approach that had a

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 274-276.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 183-184.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 179

broad appeal to various malcontents.<sup>241</sup> Such an approach would need to solve more than just material privation, but also alleviate intellectual boredom, provide philosophical fulfillment, and encourage individualistic creative expression. In this fashion, Murray Bookchin employed classical anarchism to solve the problem posed by Weber's second thesis by abandoning Marxism's "class line."

At this point, the full significance of Bookchin's critique of Weber's fifth thesis (in which Bookchin declared that ecology was exempt from the general decline in cultural achievement by capitalist society) began to come into focus. Bookchin argued that the ecological destruction wrought by industrialization (Weber's fourth thesis) set increasingly larger segments of capitalist society in opposition to the status quo.<sup>242</sup> Bookchin believed that this opposition could be organized into a communal lifestyle that stressed decentralized political forms and ensured that communal organizations could meet a broad variety of desires and needs. This satisfied Weber's third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth theses. Such communities could seek sought to heal the ecological damage caused by capitalism. This also solved the problems posed by Weber's first and second theses. Bookchin effectively reorganized and reinterpreted Josef Weber's theory. Bookchin extracted from Bakunin what he considered "the vital heart of anarchism:" its embrace of the spontaneity that ignited all revolutions, its encouragement of all forms of dissent against authority, and its refusal to stagnate and become reactionary.<sup>243</sup> Bookchin used Social Ecology and what he extracted from Bakunin to transform Weber's problematic theory of "libertarian socialism" into a working theory of anarchism.

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 82. The version of "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" published in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* is a reprint of the 1968 edition of the essay published in *Anarchos* as an individual pamphlet. See, Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Anarchos*, no. 1 (Spring 1968).

<sup>243</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 278.



## Post-Scarcity Anarchism

Weber's first and second theses, which argued that the failure of the workers' movement to produce a revolution had ushered in a new era of capitalism that co-opted the proletariat, presented a practical problem for Murray Bookchin. He believed that the "vital heart of anarchism," taken from Bakunin, solved this problem by orienting Post-Scarcity Anarchism to find its support outside of the working class. Therefore, Post-Scarcity Anarchism took Weber's sixth thesis as its focal point.

Weber's sixth thesis argued that the industrial technology developed by the advanced stages of capitalism made the realization of a post-scarcity society possible.<sup>244</sup> What Weber meant by this was that capitalism had progressed to the point where the "transitional period" to socialism governed by a "dictatorship of the proletariat" was no longer necessary and an egalitarian utopia could be achieved by other means.<sup>245</sup> The purpose of a "transitional period," Marx had argued, was for the development of a "technology of abundance" with the productive capacity to meet the material needs of all. Such a technology, however, already existed, but it was owned by bourgeois elites and employed in the service of consumerist desires.<sup>246</sup> Therefore, following the Marxist dialectic, Weber argued that the existence of a "technology of abundance" negated the historical necessity of all forms of hierarchy.<sup>247</sup> According to Weber, Marx had argued that the historical role of the dictatorship of the proletariat was to oversee the creation of advanced industrial technology. According to Marx, bourgeois society was supposed to give way to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Then, once the technological ability to end privation had

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<sup>244</sup> Ernst Zander (Josef Weber), "Majority and Minority: Reflections and Comments on Stephen Ascot's Contribution," *Contemporary Issues*, Vol. 5, No. 10 (Winter 1952), 107-118.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-118.

<sup>246</sup> Weber, "The Great Utopia," 6.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

been produced, the dictatorship of the proletariat was supposed to give way to pure socialism where each gave according to his or her means and received according to his or her needs.

Weber's outlook, however, posited the impossibility of a traditional Marxist workers revolution, and also held that toppling the modern capitalist power structure through any means was impossible. Weber's third, fourth, and fifth theses amounted to a description of an entrenched capitalist hegemony that was prepared to engage and defeat any and all challenges to its authority.<sup>248</sup> Weber argued that Western society could not be weaned from the "bourgeois work ethic" because all of history up to modern times had been "marked" by the "ever-present reality of material scarcity."<sup>249</sup> Every generation, Weber, argued had at some point known or witnessed the stark realities of economic collapse, poverty, and privation.<sup>250</sup> Under these conditions, Weber argued, the "work ethic," with its values of diligence, punctuality, frugality, discipline, cooperation, and "getting ahead when times are good, because they may take a turn for the worst," gained strength as it passed to each subsequent generation.<sup>251</sup> This entrenchment of the "work ethic" blinded the great majority of humanity to the potential of "life without want and need," Weber argued, and obscured the fact that modern society actually stood on the threshold of "utopian existence."<sup>252</sup>

Yet, while Weber argued that the historical reality of scarcity strengthened and facilitated the transmittal of cultural norms like the "work ethic" and the "competitive nature" from one generation to next (theses three, four and five), he also argued that, after World War II, capitalism in the West had entered a unique era of history. It had produced unprecedented wealth

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 3-22.

<sup>249</sup> Weber, "Majority and Minority," 107.

<sup>250</sup> Weber, "The Great Utopia," 6.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>252</sup> Weber, "A World Plan," 30-34.

and had made an end to scarcity possible (thesis six). The contradiction inherent in Weber's thought was so subtle that he never noticed it.

Murray Bookchin, however, discerned something that Weber missed. The historical reality of scarcity reinforced the capitalist "work ethic" and "competitive nature," and ensured its inculcation in each subsequent generation. Yet, the generation born in the United States after World War II had not been born into the conditions of scarcity and knew nothing other than prosperity.<sup>253</sup> Therefore, Bookchin reasoned, the same theoretical rules could not be expected to apply.<sup>254</sup>

### Applying a Generational Outlook

Bookchin agreed with Weber that the generation born during the Great Depression in the United States would never be motivated to make a revolution. Bookchin echoed William Whyte, David Reisman, and C. Wright Mills by arguing that the generation of Americans whose formative years had been shaped by the Great Depression was too interested in "fitting in" and "playing it safe" to be swayed by ideas of revolution. This generation, Bookchin continued, gravitated toward comfort and security.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, Bookchin held, it was not as if the Depression Generation had never been exposed to a utopian alternative to capitalism. Nazism and Stalinism were the Utopian projects with which this generation was familiar. These regimes promised relief from the unpredictable ebb and flow of the capitalist marketplace, but delivered

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<sup>253</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 220.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>255</sup> Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 348. Reisman, who wrote *The Lonely Crowd*, Whyte, author of *The Organization Man*, and Mills, author of *White Collar*, were representative of a group of American social critics, writing the early 1950s, who expressed concern over the effects of the Great Depression on the World War II Generation. In particular, these authors feared that this generation was too apt to conform. Members of this generation, these authors argue, gravitated toward material safety and avoided risks at all costs. Also see, Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 14-15.

only death and war. So the Depression generation, Bookchin argued, adhered to the credo of the bourgeois “work ethic.”<sup>256</sup>

In Bookchin’s estimation, however, the Depression generation failed to pass its values on to the generation of young Americans born in the wealth and prosperity of the postwar period. Having never known the threat of privation, Bookchin argued, “the young people born into abundance are - in their coming of age - regarding the values of their parents with the deepest cynicism.”<sup>257</sup> Bookchin argued that just as the material reality of scarcity perpetuated the bourgeois values in early generations, a new historical situation in the West, one of abundance, broke this cycle, causing a wide, and possibly revolutionary, generational split between the “Baby-Boomers” and their parents.

The most promising development [among young people] are those who smoke pot, fuck off on their jobs, drift into and out of factories, grow long hair or longish hair, demand more leisure time rather than more pay, steal, and harass all authority figures.<sup>258</sup>

Bookchin first evaluated the revolutionary implications of American youth culture in “Post-Scarcity Anarchism,” an essay written in 1967. At the time that Bookchin wrote the article, the youth movements of the 1960s, the Counterculture, the New Left, and the Anti-War Movement, had fully matured in their opposition to mainstream American culture. Bookchin argued that because material want was the furthest thing from the youth culture’s mind, this generation was historically prepared to reject all accepted forms of traditional culture, values, ethics, and knowledge.

[T]he cry “Black is beautiful” or “Make love, not war” marks the transformation of the traditional demand for survival (economic security) into a historically new

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 213.

demand for life... What we are witnessing is the breakdown of a century and a half of embourgeoisement and a pulverization of all bourgeois institutions at a point in history when the boldest concepts of utopia are realizable.<sup>259</sup>

The Baby-Boom generation, Bookchin argued, produced a massive variety of malcontents.

Bookchin observed young people who freely rejected the wealth their parents provided for them, scoffed at traditional morality, felt stifled by the uniformity of the corporate world, and were bored by the “cookie-cutter” blandness of suburban life. Furthermore, in the New Left and Counterculture, Bookchin observed an inclination to reject traditional forms of organization and hierarchy and embrace communal forms of living.

Capitalism increasingly emerges as the most irrational, indeed the most artificial, society in history. The society now takes on the appearance of a totally alien force... Not surprisingly, subcultures begin to emerge which emphasize a natural diet as against the society’s synthetic diet, an extended family as against the monogamous family, sexual freedom as against sexual repression, tribalism as a against atomization, community as a against urbanism, mutual aid as against competition, communism as against property, and, finally, anarchism as against the hierarchy of the state.<sup>260</sup>

### An Ecological Revolution

Beyond all other factors, Bookchin argued, continuing urban sprawl and environmental ruin set people in opposition to the status quo. “The vast urban maw,” Bookchin wrote, “offends more than just man’s aesthetic sensibilities.”<sup>261</sup> Whereas the splendor of nature inspired the artistic mind, Bookchin argued, the bland uniformity of the city dulled it.<sup>262</sup> Those who longed for a sense of community were alienated by the anonymity of overcrowded cities.<sup>263</sup> Beyond that

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 53. The chapter “Post Scarcity Anarchism,” was written in 1967 and first published as an article in *Anarchos* in 1968.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 77.

pollution, contamination, and poor sanitation attacked the body and caused countless ailments.<sup>264</sup>

A decentralized communal society that abandoned industrial urbanization, Bookchin argued, provided respite for all of the various dissidents to the capitalist order. A new order, built in accordance to Social Ecology, “established a lasting basis for the harmonization of man and nature, but also added new dimensions to the harmonization of man and man.”<sup>265</sup>

A reduction in the “dimensions of the human community,” Bookchin argued, would “solve our pollution problems” and “create real communities.” Just as Social Ecology prescribed, Post-Scarcity Anarchism would solve social problems and environmental problems side by side. It would eradicate both material want and ecological destruction. Decentralizing the economy, Bookchin maintained, would result in a redeployment of industrial technology that would “decrease over all productivity,” and thus “reduce waste” and “environmental stress,” while it “increased efficiency” by meeting the material needs of all with “reduced labor.”<sup>266</sup> As the economy decentralized, Bookchin held further, communities “would approximate a clearly definable ecosystem” and tailor production according to need and available resources.<sup>267</sup> Increased leisure time would allow for deeper engagement in creative endeavors and human interaction. Collective decision making, Bookchin held, would become de-bureaucratized and conducted on the level of personal interrelationships; ideology would give away to amicable interaction.<sup>268</sup>

If the ecological community is ever achieved in practice, social life will yield a sensitive development of human and natural diversity, falling together into a well balanced, harmonious whole. Ranging from community through region to entire continents, we will see a colorful differentiation of human groups and ecosystems,

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

each developing its unique potentialities and exposing members of the community to a wide spectrum of economic, cultural and behavioral stimuli.<sup>269</sup>

Just as Darwin argued in the nineteenth century that natural selection achieved a wide array of ecological diversity through the adaptation of plant and animal life to the conditions of its surroundings, Bookchin argued in the twentieth century that Post-Scarcity Anarchism would allow human social organization to follow a similar pattern. The problem of “want and work,” Bookchin argued, pitted humankind in a battle against the natural world.<sup>270</sup> In order to scratch an existence from the harsh reality of scarcity, humans historically competed with one another for survival.<sup>271</sup> With modern technology eradicating the problem of “want and work,” Bookchin further held, new challenges arose. Humankind now needed to end its battle with nature and disassemble its “synthetic” answer to the natural world.<sup>272</sup> Without worry of material want, humanity could now find a harmonious relationship with its environment. Such a transition, Bookchin believed, would begin with the generation born after World War II. Their already apparent rejection of the world their predecessors had built simply needed to be focused into the utopian project that Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism provided.<sup>273</sup> The “ecological community,” Bookchin believed, offered young people the freedom they desired as an alternative to the “stifling reality” of urban industrialism.<sup>274</sup>

Bookchin’s critique of Weber’s fifth thesis allowed him to transform Weber’s work into Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Bookchin not only escaped “Weber’s deeply pessimistic logic,” he wholly reinterpreted Weber’s work.<sup>275</sup> By assigning an exceptional status to ecology, as a

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>275</sup> Van Der Linden, “The Prehistory of Post-Scarcity Anarchism,” 139.

subversive science that could not be co-opted by the capitalist hegemony, Bookchin argued that a revolution based on the principles of ecological diversity could be achieved.<sup>276</sup> With this point in hand, Bookchin scoured the work of nineteenth century anarchists, extracting from his study of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin an answer to the problems Weber posed in his first five theses. His reading of nineteenth century anarchists enabled him to escape a class based analysis and look to a generational analysis. Finding a revolutionary segment of society, American youth, Bookchin applied Weber's sixth, seventh, and eighth theses (which called for the destruction of all forms of hierarchy and the decentralization of economics and politics) to achieve an anarchistic model of society that allowed for a variety of communal lifestyles and economies.

Bookchin developed a theory that solved the practical and theoretical problems of Weber's analysis. This might account for why, over time, Bookchin lost sight of the importance of Weber's influence on Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism. By 1971, when *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* hit the presses, Bookchin had systematically remolded Weber's work and made it his own. This should not, however, diminish the initial importance of Weber's influence upon Bookchin. Weber posed the questions that Bookchin later answered, making Weber's role in the development as important Bookchin's. Bookchin clearly realized this in 1971, even if he eventually forgot it later.

In *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, Peter Marshall described Murray Bookchin's intellectual development from Communism to anarchism as a result of "broken dreams" and the ability to channel his disappointment with communism into finally freeing

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<sup>276</sup> Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," 1964 edition, 3-7.



himself of “his intellectual masters.”<sup>277</sup> This interpretation, however, misses the fact that Weber’s “libertarian socialism” was already, a decade before, halfway between Trotskyism and anarchism. Furthermore, it ignores the magnetic power of Bookchin and Weber’s relationship and the importance of *Contemporary Issues* and *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Weber “formulated the outlines” of Post-Scarcity Anarchism and Bookchin preserved the ideals of Weber’s “Democracy of Content” and carried them forward into the 1960s.

Post-Scarcity Anarchism suffered from its own problems, despite resolving the pessimistic outlook of Weber’s theory. These problems emanated from Bookchin’s misinterpretation of American youth culture’s revolutionary role in society. Beginning in 1968 and continuing through the end of 1969, Bookchin attempted to open a dialogue between himself, the New Left, the Anti-War Movement, and the Counterculture. In particular, Bookchin engaged Students for a Democratic Society, the flagship student organization of the New Left founded by principally by Tom Hayden and Todd Gitlin in 1962. In 1969, SDS printed and distributed three of Bookchin’s essays.<sup>278</sup> The last of these essays, “Listen! Marxist!,” was a failed attempt to encourage SDS chapters on college campuses throughout the country to throw the Progressive Labor Party (a Maoist student organization) out of their ranks.<sup>279</sup> His attempt failed, and soon after the publication of “Listen! Marxist!” the national office of Students for a Democratic Society collapsed and the organization scattered. Bookchin’s troubled dealings with the New Left encouraged him to further re-evaluate his own positions throughout the 1970s,

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<sup>277</sup> Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 602-603.

<sup>278</sup> The three essays are: Murray Bookchin, “Anarchy and Organization: A Letter to the Left,” *New Left Notes* (Jan, 15, 1969). Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society: The American Perspective and SDS,” written anonymously, Radical Decentralist Project Resolution #1. Platform of the Radical Decentralist Project at the last SDS Conference (June 1969). Murray Bookchin, “Listen! Marxist!” *Anarchos*, distributed as a pamphlet for the SDS Conference (June 1969), 1-23.

<sup>279</sup> Bookchin, *Post Scarcity Anarchism*, 176.

pushing him, at least in his own mind, further away from Josef Weber's influence.<sup>280</sup> The early 1970s ended another era for Bookchin. Just as his disappointment with the labor movement in the late Forties ended an ideological epoch of his life that drew him to Josef Weber and away from Marxist Leninism, his disappointment with the student movement pushed him away from the project he had developed during his years at *Contemporary Issues* and on his own with *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*.

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<sup>280</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Between the 30s and the 60s," *Social Text*, No. 10 (Summer 1983), 250.

## Chapter 4

### 1969

In the spring of 1969, Murray Bookchin made his first attempt at gathering a support base from American youths. The group to which he turned was the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). There were a number of reasons behind why Bookchin chose SDS as his audience. First, the organization's general political orientation made SDS, in Bookchin's opinion, a sympathetic audience for Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Second, with a national office in New York, branch offices located on hundreds of University Campuses, national conferences and delegates, and an official newsletter, *New Left Notes*, SDS possessed the capability to disseminate literature to thousands of students. On the other hand Bookchin considered a number of factions within SDS detrimental to the achievement of a student revolution. Foremost among these was the Progressive Labor Party (PL), a Maoist student organization that had infiltrated SDS in 1965 in hopes of utilizing its local chapters as a recruitment pool. Bookchin thought that such factions needed to be confronted directly, and he believed that he could influence SDS's national delegates to expel PL and to remain committed to the antiauthoritarian stance of SDS's foundational *Port Huron Statement* (1962).

At the end of the 1969 academic year, SDS's national delegation met at a preliminary conference in Austin, Texas. The goal of the conference was to decide which issues would be taken to the organization's national conference later that summer, when SDS would elect a new president and create its official position for the 1969-1970 academic year. The problem, however, was that the organization had become so factionalized that the delegates were incapable of developing a coherent platform. As the national SDS conference in Chicago approached during the summer of 1969, the leadership split into two primary camps. The first of

these factions was the Revolutionary Youth Movement, which was most prominently represented by Students for a Democratic Society's national committee members, including Mark Rudd, Bernadine Dohrn, Tom Hayden, Todd Gitlin, David Gilbert, and John Jacobs. The second faction was the Worker Student Alliance (WSA), which drew most of its support from local chapters. The largest and most influential segment of the WSA was PL.<sup>281</sup>

Each of these two major camps contained their own internal factions and, of the two, the Revolutionary Youth Movement suffered from more internal strife. RYM scraped together an uneasy alliance of Marxist radicals fearful of PL's power (who later formed the Weather Underground), antiwar pacifists, and supporters of the Black Panther Party. The only unifying force that held RYM together was its opposition to PL and WSA. On the other hand, Progressive Labor's coalition was fairly well wrought. Beginning in 1965, PL infiltrated dozens of local campus SDS chapters, recruiting members and reshaping local SDS to offices to reflect their politics and organization. Whereas SDS had been founded as an autonomous student movement, PL attempted to organize students as allies of the working class toward the end of a Maoist revolution.<sup>282</sup>

PL's infiltration of SDS had been made easier by the latter group's disorganization. Although the *Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society* made SDS officially anti-liberal and anti-Marxist, PL's presence within the organization was tolerated from the outset by a general reluctance within SDS' membership to participate in red-baiting. The decision by Lyndon Johnson's administration to escalate of the Vietnam War in 1965 also pushed thousands of new members in the ranks of SDS. This not only caused local chapters to be overrun with hundreds of members who were not dues paying national members of the

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<sup>281</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1974), 333-335, 568.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

organization, but it changed the culture of SDS. The organization's earliest membership primarily came from the East and from elite universities. Men like Jim Monsonis, Lee Webb, and Todd Gitlin typified this first generation of SDS members: intellectual, privileged, and urbane. The antiwar movement, however, created a new breed of SDS members, men and women who were nonintellectual and middle or working class. As Kirkpatrick Sale pointed out in his history of SDS, this second generation tended not only to be "ignorant of the history of the left" and its political evolution, "but downright uninterested."<sup>283</sup> Disciplined and well organized, PL moved in and quickly established a firm support basis while SDS' national office struggled to regain some element of direction over the local chapters.<sup>284</sup>

The Students for a Democratic Society's National Convention commenced in Chicago, Illinois, on June 18, 1969. More than 2,000 delegates representing each of the local chapters attended the conference, held in the Chicago Coliseum. Both RYM and PL arrived at the convention with large and organized support bases. After two days of saber-rattling between the two factions, the conference deteriorated into petty bickering.

[An] unplanned incident blew the convention apart. The SDS National Office (a RYM outpost) had invited the Black Panther Party to address the Convention. PL didn't like the Black Panthers because they didn't recognize any other party than their own; how could there be two Marxist parties, both with the Truth? And the Black Panthers didn't like them. A Panther leader was at the podium, attacking "armchair Marxists" when he suddenly started talking about women's liberation, the power of love, and "pussy power." This stupid statement played perfectly into the hands of PL, who started chanting, "Fight Male Chauvinism! Fight Male Chauvinism!" From there it was pandemonium in the [Chicago Coliseum], as we just vehemently chanted back, "Fight racism!" The next day, the Panthers demanded that SDS expel PL for its racism in not supporting national liberation; the RYM faction then led a very angry walk-out from the convention, thereby splitting the organization.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>284</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 237-238.

<sup>285</sup> Mark Rudd, "The Death of SDS," *Mark Rudd: Yes, this is the Mark Rudd from the Sixties* (accessed online: [http:// www.markrudd.com/?sds-and-weather/the-death-of-sds.html](http://www.markrudd.com/?sds-and-weather/the-death-of-sds.html)).

The remainder of the convention unfolded more like a neighborhood children's clubhouse meeting than a political caucus. RYM, which represented the national office of SDS led by Mark Rudd, otherwise known as the Weatherman, most of the antiwar delegation, and the conference's Black Liberation delegation, carried out its own meeting behind closed doors, and barred entry to any members of PL. RYM elected its own National officers. Mark Rudd was made the National Secretary, and then RYM voted to expel PL. On the other side of the doors, PL's support base similarly elected its own national officers and expelled RYM.<sup>286</sup>

The effect [of the split] on SDS as a whole was disaster. By the beginning of 1970 the national organization had ceased to exist. We in the Weatherman leadership had made a decision that SDS wasn't radical enough, that it was an impediment to the building of a revolutionary movement in this country. We needed an underground guerilla army to begin the revolutionary armed struggle. So we disbanded the National and Regional Offices, dissolved the national organization, and set the chapters adrift. Many chapters kept organizing, in their own ways, against the war and racism; demoralized, others disbanded.<sup>287</sup>

The clash between the Weathermen and PL ultimately divided and destroyed SDS. The two groups led the two largest and most influential factions within SDS, and have, deservedly, received the majority of attention from historians. There was, however, a third faction present at SDS' National Convention of 1969 that has gone largely unnoticed. This third faction, called the Radical Decentralist Project, was led by Murray Bookchin, who anonymously submitted a resolution for consideration on the conference floor. He also had representatives from Up Against the Wall, an anarchist group based in New York, distribute an essay, "Listen! Marxist!," that further attempted to gain supporters for Bookchin's faction.<sup>288</sup> As the Weathermen and PL tore SDS apart in their battle for control, Bookchin's goal shifted away from attempting to

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 225.

influence SDS as a whole. Rather, he simply mounted an attempt to draw as many potential supporters from the conference floor as he could.<sup>289</sup> Both “Listen! Marxist!” and Bookchin’s anonymous floor resolution, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society: The American Perspective and the SDS,” jointly addressed constituents of the other two major factions. Bookchin hoped to attract moderate delegates who were both dissatisfied by the RYM’s non-white, Third World orientation and frightened by PL’s hard line stance advocating the importation of Mao’s Cultural Revolution to the United States.<sup>290</sup>

The potential constituents that Bookchin hoped to win were those students attracted by to SDS by the *Port Huron Statement*, which Bookchin regarded “the most authentically American expression of a new radicalism.”<sup>291</sup> In Bookchin’s opinion, the *Port Huron Statement* was an antiauthoritarian and “uniquely American populist agenda” that “stressed the utopian aspects of the ‘American Dream’.”<sup>292</sup> The students who had initially filed into SNCC and SDS, Bookchin held further, did so out of a desire to “revolutionize” the American system of government “rather than to overthrow it.”<sup>293</sup> These students participated in a social movement rather than a political one.<sup>294</sup> They set out to combat racism and prejudice by an agenda that emphasized the libertarian aspects of American idealism.<sup>295</sup> Participatory democracy, Bookchin

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<sup>289</sup> Janet Biehl, “A Bibliography of Published Works by Murray Bookchin,” *Anarchy Archives* (accessed online: [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/biehlbiblio.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/biehlbiblio.html)).

<sup>290</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society: the American Perspective and the SDS” (accessed online: [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)). Originally published as a leaflet distributed at the SDS National Convention, June 18, 1969.

<sup>291</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” *Social Text*, No. 9/10, The 60’s without Apology (Spring, 1984), 250.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 251-252.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

held, emphasized “the eschatological ideal of a ‘New World,’ frontier mutualism, decentralized power, republican virtue, and moral idealism.”<sup>296</sup>

Over the course of the conference, Murray Bookchin made his case for the applicability of Post-Scarcity Anarchism and its compatibility with participatory democracy. He attempted to push the delegates of the conference to reach the same conclusions that he had reached a decade earlier under Josef Weber: Marxist-Leninism was a theoretical dead end, not a revolutionary alternative to the American status quo. He tried to bridge participatory democracy and the “democracy of content.” Bookchin accomplished this with varying degrees of success. Much like the official convention program, “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” Bookchin’s contributions were steeped in the dense jargon of Marxism. This alienated much of the convention’s rank and file attendance, who were unable to understand the theoretical arguments being presented or who were bored by it.<sup>297</sup> Among those who were able to understand Bookchin’s argument, many were leaders in PL and the Weathermen’s respective factions, and therefore predisposed to reject it.<sup>298</sup> Bookchin was nevertheless able to collect a small cadre of followers from the Chicago conference, however, and others came to him at the Institute for Social Ecology (which opened in 1974) from the ranks of SDS and other youth movement groups.<sup>299</sup>

Above all else, Bookchin wanted to preserve “those elements of participatory democracy” that best represented an “indigenous form of American radicalism.”<sup>300</sup> He argued that the *Port Huron Statement* had established a populist agenda that was “anti-authoritarian,

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>297</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, 564.

<sup>298</sup> Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” 251.

<sup>299</sup> Michael Caplan and Daniel Chodorkoff, “Education and Community Action: A History of the Institute for Social Ecology’s Programs,” *Harbinger*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Fall 2002), 5.

<sup>300</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).



anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist,” without being distinctly “anti-American.”<sup>301</sup> Bookchin held further that Post-Scarcity Anarchism and participatory democracy were profoundly similar.<sup>302</sup> Neither group of ideas argued that the “American Dream,” the idealistic belief in the United States as a land of opportunity freedom from want and tyranny, was fundamentally flawed. Rather, both sets wanted to “revolutionize American society” to make it fit more closely with the “American Dream.”<sup>303</sup>

Bookchin argued that anarchism was the only radical tradition that possessed indigenous roots in the United States.<sup>304</sup> The American intellectual tradition, he held, was rife with themes such as “the bonds of fraternity and community,” “the individualism of the ‘frontier mentality’,” and the celebration of “nature and solitude.”<sup>305</sup> These common themes, Bookchin posited, were the result of a nascent anarchistic impulse within American culture that carried through history from the ideals of the American revolution, through the “yeoman republic,” the *Federalist Papers*, and the writings Henry David Thoreau.<sup>306</sup> *The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society* and the ideals of participatory democracy, Bookchin argued were the latest heirs of this American anarchistic tradition.<sup>307</sup>

For a youth revolution to succeed, Bookchin therefore argued, SDS had to remain committed to a populist agenda that tapped into the anarchistic strains of American culture. Furthermore the students had to “devote [their] main efforts to those sectors of the population

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<sup>301</sup> Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” 251-252.

<sup>302</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” 252.

<sup>305</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

<sup>306</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 143-169.

<sup>307</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

that are most susceptible to radicalization.”<sup>308</sup> Before SDS could seek allies from other segments of society, primarily the working class, they had to win the support of their peers.

If the measure of [SDS’s] achievement is the influence it exercises on youth and students, it has failed miserably... In withdrawing into a hardening sectarian shell, we will be well on the way toward losing whatever influence we have exercised in the past on campuses.<sup>309</sup>

PL and the Worker-Student Alliance were responsible, in Bookchin’s view, for much the “poisonous influence” that had infiltrated SDS and “deadened” its populist appeal. Furthermore, Bookchin was deeply disappointed by the Revolutionary Youth Movement and its ties to Black Power, the Black Panther Party, and Third World revolutionary movements. In similar fashion, Bookchin bemoaned the “deadening influence” of these “deconstructive” ideologies on the youth movement.<sup>310</sup>

All the old crap of the thirties is coming back again – the shit about the “class line,” the “role of the working class,” the “trained cadres,” the “vanguard party,” and the “proletarian dictatorship.” It’s all back again, and in a more vulgarized form than ever.<sup>311</sup>

Bookchin accused PL of stymieing the organic development of SDS.<sup>312</sup> In its earliest incarnations, Bookchin argued, SDS specifically and the New Left more generally embodied a rejection of their parents’ values.

On a scale unprecedented in American history, millions of people, especially among the young, are shedding their commitment to the society in which they live. They no longer believe in its claims. They no longer respect its symbols. They no longer accept its goals, and, most significantly, they refuse almost intuitively to live by its institutional and social codes.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 173. The quotation provided is the opening to “Listen! Marxist!” addressed to members of PL.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>313</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

The pattern and shape of the youth culture's rebellion, Bookchin further held, took its greatest strength from the spontaneity and variety of its manifestations.<sup>314</sup> As the 1960s wore on, the most promising development Bookchin witnessed was the hybridization of the Counterculture's Dionysian appetites and the radical political culture of the college campuses.<sup>315</sup>

In particular, Bookchin looked favorably upon the bohemianism of Berkeley, California's university district.<sup>316</sup> In the spring of 1969, Berkeley's local SDS chapter had banded together with local residents and Berkeley's "permanent population of Bohemian street people" to propose that the University of California use a derelict lot to construct a "People's Park," a free area open to students and residents alike. The proposition initially failed, and a standoff ensued, resulting in a violent confrontation between protestors and campus and city police. "The ties established between the students and street people are in many ways," Bookchin argued, "a model of the kind of development [SDS] could follow in breaking out of the sectarian shell that has enveloped [it]."<sup>317</sup> What had occurred in many local chapters of SDS, of which Berkeley served merely as a prime example Bookchin argued, was the creation of a space where radicals and bohemians could "smoke dope," "engage in casual sex," "discuss the day's news," and "tend to the local garden" all at once.<sup>318</sup> These hybridized radical enclaves, Bookchin argued, represented a total revolt against bourgeois society, its ethics, its morals, its values, and its economy. Such enclaves, Bookchin argued, had to be left to grow unperturbed. No one would be drawn to SDS because it has the 'correct transitional program on imperialism'," Bookchin wrote,

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<sup>314</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 175.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

“they will be drawn to SDS only if it expresses their drive for life and articulates their detestation of deadening middle-class and proletarian values.”<sup>319</sup>

PL’s infiltration of SDS, Bookchin argued, deadened the revolutionary spontaneity of the youth movement, because PL disrupted organic forms of rebellion in favor of channeling revolt into “formulaic, dogmatic, and dialectical forms.”<sup>320</sup> According to Bookchin, Progressive Labor, was, at its heart, painfully conservative and reactionary.<sup>321</sup> Every chapter of SDS where PL gained power, Bookchin argued, it reasserted the social codes of archaic bourgeois society by a new name.<sup>322</sup> PL, in Bookchin’s opinion, protected women from male chauvinism by reinforcing the bonds of monogamy, reified racial divides by organizing “for racial minorities” while excluding them, and recast bourgeois frugality as revolutionary sacrifice.<sup>323</sup>

The credo of “proletarian morality” replaces the mores of Puritanism and the work ethic. The old substance of exploitative society reappears in new forms, draped in a red flag, decorated by portraits of Mao.<sup>324</sup>

A student revolution, Bookchin stressed to the delegates of the SDS conference, had to carry on without PL. SDS, Bookchin warned, could not afford to stagnate and enslave itself to an outdated ideology. Rather, the movement had to be allowed to move on continuously and adopt whatever forms of resistance “arose spontaneously.”<sup>325</sup> From the outlook of Post-Scarcity Anarchism, viable and sustainable revolutionary activity needed to be impulsively anti-authoritarian, not calculated and ideological.

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 184.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 177.

Although Bookchin was most vehement in his contempt for PL, he did not give an exculpatory pardon to the “inherently rotten” elements of the Revolutionary Youth Movement.<sup>326</sup> In particular, Bookchin was intensely critical of the rhetoric of Black Power and “Third World Solidarity,” which had come to dominate RYM’s agenda. The issue of *New Left Notes* distributed at the 1969 Chicago SDS Convention, “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” was a 13,310 word document. Over 8000 words of this document, peppered with slogans such as “What is the Black Colony” and “Black Liberation Means Revolution,” were devoted to the agendas of Black Power and Third World Revolution.<sup>327</sup>

“Gilt-ridden, literally anti-American rather than anti-imperialist,” Bookchin later assessed, “[SDS became] ‘third world’ oriented without any sense of the redeeming features of the libertarian elements in the American tradition.”<sup>328</sup> The celebration of Third World Revolutionaries like Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh by members of RYM, Bookchin argued, made the youth movement heinously offensive, even amongst many of its peers (a number of whom fought in Vietnam). Furthermore, it made the youth movement divisive and sectarian rather than antiauthoritarian and unifying.<sup>329</sup>

Furthermore, Bookchin argued, RYM misguidedly believed that the solutions of emerging world revolutionaries could be applied to the First World. “The struggle going on in the Third World,” Bookchin wrote, “is a struggle within the domain of unavoidable scarcity.”<sup>330</sup> In Vietnam, China, and Latin America, Bookchin held further, the struggle of revolutionaries

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>327</sup> The “Black Colony” is derived from Black Power, particularly from the Rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael who served as the president of SNCC from 1966-1970. “Black Liberation Means Revolution,” was a Black Panther Party slogan.

<sup>328</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Between the 30s and the 60s,” 250.

<sup>329</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

was not only one of independence, but of technological modernization and industrialization.<sup>331</sup>

China and Vietnam were confronted with tasks the United States and Western Europe had solved decades earlier. From the perspective of Social Ecology, Bookchin argued, the historical development of the Third World explained the political forms and methods employed by Castroism and Maoism. The Third World had not yet developed a technological solution to scarcity and therefore had not reached the point where “all forms of hierarchy [could] then be dissolved in favor of communal ownership of the means of production.”<sup>332</sup> The United States, Bookchin contended, confronted a set of problems and potentials that differed qualitatively from those confronting the Third World. “We fight on the most advanced terrain in history,” Bookchin wrote, “that opens the prospect of a post-scarcity society, a libertarian society, not a substitution of one system of hierarchy by another.”<sup>333</sup>

The only way SDS could aid the Third World, Bookchin argued, would be to revolutionize the United States. The dissolution of all forms of hierarchy and domination within American society, Bookchin argued, would necessarily curb the imperialism and expansionism of American foreign policy as well.<sup>334</sup> Societal development in Asia, Africa, and South America would have to occur at its own pace, unabated by outside influences “which will only deaden the organic development of Third World.”<sup>335</sup> A revolution in the United States and Europe, Bookchin argued, would end the international exploitation of the Third World by the First and give the developing world an opportunity to evolve independently toward post-scarcity society.

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 98-99.

<sup>333</sup> Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Post-Scarcity Society,” ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

This acknowledgement, Bookchin argued, made Post-Scarcity Anarchism's approach necessarily an internationalist one<sup>336</sup>.

Concerning the problems of racism in America and the Civil Rights Movement, Bookchin argued that SDS allied itself with the African-American movement's most problematic element, the Black Panthers.<sup>337</sup> Bookchin held that SDS could not credibly claim to be a front against American imperialism abroad and racism at home when it espoused the radical racial politics of the Black Panthers, which did not have the full support of African Americans.<sup>338</sup> The reduction of politics to the issue of race, Bookchin continued, their indiscriminate support for and use of violence, and the misogynistic undertow of Panther ideology, made the Black Panthers a fringe movement within a minority population.<sup>339</sup>

Bookchin admired the fundamental tenets of Black Power, as expressed by the president of SNCC, Stokely Carmichael.<sup>340</sup> As Bookchin understood it, Black Power voiced the desire of African-American radicals to take control of their own movement, on their own terms, free from the interference of even sympathetic whites.<sup>341</sup> As such, he argued that the only genuinely anti-racist stance that SDS and other white student organizations could adopt was one that heeded black radicals' request and allowed African Americans to organize independently. Similar to his approach to the Third World, Bookchin declared that the best course of action in combating racism for SDS and other student groups would be to revolutionize American society and allow African-American groups to participate in such an effort on their own terms. An anti-

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 186-187.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>339</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Anarchy and Organization: A Letter to the Left," *New Left Notes* (January 15, 1969), 4.

<sup>340</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 186.

<sup>341</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Toward a Post-Scarcity Society," ([http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bookchin/sds.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bookchin/sds.html)).

authoritarian movement, Bookchin argued, contained within it a place for an independent African-American community.<sup>342</sup>

After the end of the Chicago conference, which resulted in the dissolution of SDS's national organization, the students who eventually gravitated toward Bookchin were those who, like him, had been attracted to the organization by the ideals of participatory democracy. The most important follower Bookchin gained from the ranks of the New Left was Daniel Chodorkoff. In 1969, Chodorkoff was a Ph.D. candidate in Cultural Anthropology at the New School for Social Research Graduate Faculty located in New York City.<sup>343</sup> The antiwar movement initially brought Chodorkoff into contact with the SDS chapter located on Columbia University's campus, where he developed a loose affiliation with the Weathermen.<sup>344</sup> After the dissolution of the SDS national office, however, Chodorkoff became disillusioned by the Weathermen's choice of a violent course of action and did not go underground with them.<sup>345</sup> Subsequently Chodorkoff forged a relationship with Bookchin. He quickly became Bookchin's star pupil and favored colleague. Upon completion of his Ph.D., Chodorkoff received an academic posting at Goddard College located in Plainfield, Vermont.

In 1974, Chodorkoff and Bookchin cofounded the Institute for Social Ecology, which established an affiliation with Goddard College. In 1975, the institute relocated to the Cate Farm, a 40 acre parcel of land owned by Goddard located outside of Plainfield.<sup>346</sup> The institute adopted the precepts of Post-Scarcity Anarchism as its mission statement, and declared itself an anti-capitalist and antiauthoritarian think tank dedicated to developing new strategies for social

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Daniel Chordokoff, Curriculum Vitae for the Institute for Social Ecology (<http://www.social-ecology.org/author/dan-chordokoff/>).

<sup>344</sup> Peter Staudenmaier to author. February 14, 2011.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Michael Caplan and Daniel Chordorkoff, "Education and Community Action," 5.



organization and economics.<sup>347</sup> In its early days, the institute offered a twelve week summer program. Out of the roughly one hundred students who attended the institute's first classes in 1974, the majority hailed from SDS chapters that had dissolved or meandered without direction after the national organization's collapse.<sup>348</sup>

Another important contact Bookchin had from the New Left was Allan Hoffman, also from New York City. Unlike Chodorkoff, who became aware of Bookchin only after the Chicago SDS Conference in 1969, Hoffman began to develop a relationship with Bookchin in 1966, when he was twenty-three years old. During the mid-sixties, Hoffman strayed in and out of the SDS chapter on Columbia's campus and immersed himself in the bohemian culture of Greenwich Village.<sup>349</sup> In 1966, Hoffman joined the New York Federation of Anarchists, a group to which Bookchin also belonged. Hoffman helped Bookchin found and edit *Good Soup*, the organization's newsletter, which released its first issue in 1966. The magazine featured commentary on revolution, forms of organization, ecology, and economics. Furthermore, it was fully illustrated by Ben Morea, a painter from an antiauthoritarian art group called Black Mask. The first issue of *Good Soup* featured a portrait of Lyndon Johnson done by Morea with the slogan, "Kill for Peace."<sup>350</sup>

Hoffman also became one of the initial members of Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (UAW/MF) in 1966. Up Against the Wall was a student anarchist group, with a loose affiliation to SDS, that combined political radicalism and countercultural bohemianism in a fashion similar

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>349</sup> Osha Neuman, *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: A Memoir of the Sixties with Notes for Next Time* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 11-27.

<sup>350</sup> Ed. Allan Hoffman, *Good Soup*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (New York: Spring 1966).

to the Yippies, who formed after them.<sup>351</sup> In 1967 Up Against the Wall participated with SDS in the Pentagon anti-war protest, and then helped occupy Columbia University during the student uprising a year later. Thanks in large part to Hoffman, the group came into the orbit of Bookchin's influence. When the SDS conference in Chicago split between the PL-led Worker-Student Alliance the Weathermen-led Revolutionary Youth Movement, the UAW/MF delegates present, including Hoffman, walked out on the conference and joined neither faction.<sup>352</sup>

Hoffman was also responsible for introducing Bookchin to Peter Berg, founder of the San Francisco Diggers, yet another group that, like UAW/MF, blended political radicalism with a countercultural lifestyle.<sup>353</sup> In 1966, Berg was still living in New York City.<sup>354</sup> He was introduced to Bookchin at an organizing event for an antiwar march from Greenwich Village to the UN Headquarters. Bookchin left an immediate and lasting impression on him.<sup>355</sup>

Dissenters coming out of the repressive Fifties tended to be overly self-conscious and almost monomaniacally declarative about their positions. Murray was a distinct exception. He was confident and almost avuncular about his background... But his agreeableness ended with the Marxist organizers of the [antiwar] demonstration and their centralized decision-making. I didn't recognize him in the march that eventually materialized but came away from the meeting inspired to begin reading about the origins and practice of contemporary anarchism.<sup>356</sup>

Not long thereafter, Berg relocated to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco where he helped form the Diggers.<sup>357</sup> Berg maintained a relationship with Hoffman and Bookchin into the seventies, and introduced the other seminal members of the San Francisco group, Emmet

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<sup>351</sup> Neuman, *Up Against the Wall Motherfucker*, 45.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-213.

<sup>353</sup> Peter Berg, "Some Encounters with Murray Bookchin," *Planet Drum Foundation* (<http://www.planetdrum.org/bookchin.htm>). See also, Mick Sinclair, *San Francisco; A Cultural and Literary History* (New York: Interlink Publishing Group, 2003), 126-143.

<sup>354</sup> Peter Berg, "Some Encounters with Murray Bookchin," (<http://www.planetdrum.org/bookchin.htm>).

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

Grogan, Peter Coyote, Billy Murcott, and Butcher Brooks, to Bookchin's work.<sup>358</sup> Later, Berg helped found the Planet Drum Foundation in 1973, an early environmental activist organization based loosely on the principles of Social Ecology. When Bookchin and Daniel Chodorkoff founded the Institute for Social Ecology in 1974, Berg and Planet Drum provided an important recruiting base for the institute on the West Coast.<sup>359</sup>

Allan Hoffman died in a truck accident in 1971, at the age of 28.<sup>360</sup> Hoffman's death prompted Bookchin to dedicate *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* to him as well Josef Weber. Just as Bookchin considered Weber a link to everything "vital and libertarian" in the Marxist intellectual tradition, he considered Hoffman a link to the most revolutionary elements of the New Left.<sup>361</sup> Indeed, the students and groups with which Bookchin developed the most amiable relationship were those, like Hoffman and UAW/MF, that combined political radicalism with a countercultural lifestyle.

The vast majority of the New Left, however, left Bookchin disheartened.<sup>362</sup> In his opinion, the antiwar movement, responsible for pushing thousands of new recruits into the ranks of New Left organizations like SDS, was also responsible for disrupting the youth movement.<sup>363</sup>

Ironically, it may have been the Vietnam war itself, so often regarded as [the New Left's] most important stimulus, that more significantly than any other factor prevented the 60s' movements from developing slowly, organically, and indigenously into lasting, deeply rooted American phenomena, charged by a deeper sense of consciousness and a more historic sense of mission than it was to achieve.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 30.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>363</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Between the 30s and the 60s," 250.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 250.

Bookchin had envisioned a youth revolution slowly taking shape as the various forms of 60s rebellion, the New Left, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Counterculture slowly integrated into a single movement with a broad base of support.<sup>365</sup> Rather, with a sudden surge in membership, the leadership of many New Left organizations, and most notably SDS, could do nothing more than “imitate” past revolutions in a “more vulgar form than ever.”<sup>366</sup> In Bookchin’s opinion, the New Left cut loose whatever support it had gained when it turned to a violent campaign that offended and angered Americans rather than acquiring Americans’ sympathy.<sup>367</sup> Rather than exporting their rebellion to other segments of society, the students of the New Left isolated themselves, and their movement withered and died.

The end of the 1960s had a marked effect on Bookchin’s outlook. Heading into the 1970s, Bookchin’s writings gained much of the deep-rooted depression and pessimism of Josef Weber, Bookchin’s mentor. Just as Weber came to doubt the revolutionary role of Europe’s working class, Bookchin came to doubt the revolutionary fervor of the Baby Boom generation. He re-channeled his energies into teaching and other forms of activism. In particular, Bookchin spent the 1970s re-applying Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism to the growing environmental movement. As the 1970’s wore on, the Institute for Social Ecology and likeminded member organizations of the Green Movement, such as the Planet Drum Foundation, grew in stature and influence.

The Institute for Social Ecology became a test lab where the ideas and theories that Bookchin developed were passed on to the students who attended its twelve week summer workshops. The research produced there adhered to Bookchin’s ardent stance that environmental

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<sup>365</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 223.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 174,

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

problems and social problems were intrinsically related. Over the course of the 1970s, the Institute offered courses in urban redevelopment, ecology, political theory, and economic ethics; all were tailored to Bookchin's decentralist and anti-capitalist outlook. It proposed new energy strategies that incorporated alternative forms of energy production that harnessed readily available local resources. It proposed partial de-industrialization, partially replacing urbanized mass production of commodities with localized small scale production of necessary amenities: clothing, shelter, and food. Finally, the institute experimented with alternative forms of municipal government, using participatory democracy to break city governments up into neighborhood community units that used direct democracy: citizens' councils, open-air plebiscites (literally gathering community members together to make collective decisions), and open forum debates.<sup>368</sup>

Bookchin lived and worked on the institutes' campus until the early 1990s, when he moved into a small house about 40 minutes away. For those who knew him, learned from him, or even just heard him lecture, he was engrossing figure with an eternally curious if ardently stubborn mind. Trained, almost programmed, to view history, science, economics, and politics in purely Hegelian terms, he was undyingly convinced that the dialectic of human history would produce a society that created what he regarded as true freedom. He believed in the dialectic inevitability of a future post-scarcity society that would be entirely rational. It would not only solve the problem of material need borne from an age of scarcity, but it would fulfill desires for intellectual and expressive freedom and erase all forms of hierarchy. This outlook made Bookchin unwilling to give up his cause, even when others did. This component of his personality, maybe more than anything else, drove him to set aside the failures of one utopian

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<sup>368</sup> Michael Caplan and Daniel Chordorkoff, "Education and Community Action," 11-12.

movement and begin the preparations for another. His life spanned two generations of American radicalism, the Old Left, with the labor organizing drives of the 1930s and 1940s, and the New Left, with its cries for direct democracy, as well as an end to racism, imperialism, and capitalism. He engaged both movements with equal vim and vigor, even though he never realized the utopian society for which he labored so stridently.

## Conclusion

In his synthetic history of Anarchist philosophy, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, Peter Marshall describes Bookchin as a “tragic” figure whose disappointment with the failed American workers’ revolution of the 1930s and 1940s prompted Bookchin to “think against himself and his [Marxist] masters.”<sup>369</sup> There is a limited amount of truth in that assessment. For those who were intimately familiar with him, or are intimately familiar with his work, however, questions arise. Chiefly, it must be asked, did Bookchin ever really dispense with the tradition of Marxist radicalism to embrace anarchism fully? A complex assessment of Bookchin’s intellectual progress would suggest, no, he did not.

Briefly before his death in 1940, Leon Trotsky (whom Bookchin adored to his dying day), imparted his followers with a warning that if a worldwide workers’ revolution failed to materialize in the aftermath of World War II, then Marxists would have to rethink everything. This prescription as much as anything else pushed Bookchin beyond the dogmatic scope of orthodox Marxist-Leninism into a consideration of alternative outlooks that could be used to amend Marxism, but not dispense with it. Bookchin’s ideological maturation was not a form of rebellion against his communist upbringing; rather, it derived from a desire to modernize Marxism. Bookchin claimed that his work marked an attempt to make Marx’s brilliant critique of the nineteenth century relevant to the realities of the twentieth century.

In the process, Bookchin developed a powerful intellectual relationship with one of his preeminent contemporaries, Josef Weber. The significance of Weber’s impact upon Bookchin’s development is undeniable. Weber’s “Great Utopia” provided Bookchin with a rough schematic for how a new viable form of revolutionary Marxism could be achieved. While writing for *Dinge*

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<sup>369</sup> Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 602.

*der Zeit* during the seminal years of his intellectual career, Bookchin developed the rude prototype of a political philosophy that, over the course of the 1960s, became Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism. As Weber's favored protégé, Bookchin was intended to succeed Weber as the editor in chief of *Dinge der Zeit*. This distinction never came to fruition. Shortly after Weber's death in 1959, Bookchin parted ways with *Dinge der Zeit*, and the journal fractured and withered without its guiding mind. Much of the "democracy of content's" intellectual legacy, however, is preserved in *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971) and other articles by Bookchin, such as "Toward a Post-Scarcity Society" (1969) and "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" (1964).

In an important way, however, Bookchin was also distinct from his mentor, Josef Weber. As an intensely loyal Hegelian and Marxist thinker, Bookchin refused to give up his dialectical outlook on the progress of history. He believed, perhaps to a fault, that the achievement of a rational society without poverty, hierarchy, and exploitation was the inevitable destination of human history. This belief prompted Bookchin to depart from the pessimism of Weber's work and to continue in his labor to develop a new form of radicalism that addressed the problems of the failed revolutions of the past. Whereas Weber believed that capitalism dulled the revolutionary implications of all sciences and philosophies, he looked to ecology as the discipline that could "restore or even transcend the liberatory estate of the traditional sciences and philosophies."<sup>370</sup> Not merely borrowing Weber's work, Bookchin tediously reinterpreted Weber's contributions and made Weber's ideas his own.

Moving through the 1960s, Bookchin recruited his own followers from the ranks of the New Left, most prominently Allan Hoffman and the UAW/MF group, Peter Berg of the San

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<sup>370</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971), 58.



Francisco Diggers and later the Planet Drum Foundation, and Daniel Chodorkoff, who helped Bookchin found the Institute for Social Ecology. During the late 1960s, Bookchin began to weave elements of the New Left's ideology together with his own. In particular, Bookchin lauded participatory democracy as the "most authentically American expression of a new radicalism."<sup>371</sup> Bookchin thought that Post-Scarcity Anarchism and participatory democracy could be looked at side by side as antiauthoritarian, decentralist, anti-capitalist, and anti-Soviet political alternatives. At the Institute for Social Ecology, the ideals of the "democracy of content" and the New Left were preserved through the 1970s and into the 1980s.

Bookchin was a living link between two generations of American radicalism. His experiences as a foot soldier in the workers' organization drives of the 1930s left a lasting mark on his intellectual career. They shaped his outlook and approach to the radical sixties. In many ways, Bookchin was a singular figure in the history of American radical culture, stuck somewhat between generations. Bookchin was younger than many of the Marxist radicals of European origin who defined the Old Left. He was too young to have been expelled with the Lovestoneites in 1929, too young to participate in the Spanish Civil War, and only eighteen at the time of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the dismissal of Shachtmanites from the CPUSA. On the other hand, Bookchin was too old to have been a seminal member of the New Left. He was not present at the Port Huron conference, nor was he a member of the Student League for Industrial Democracy, a forerunner to SDS. Yet, he engaged with the young people of the New Left at an intimate level that is not paralleled by his contemporaries from the postwar left. Herbert Marcuse, older than Bookchin, begrudgingly accepted his role as the unwilling and distant "Father" of the New Left. Marcuse's colleagues in the Frankfurt School maintained an equal distance from the New Left

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<sup>371</sup> Murray Bookchin, "Between the 30s and the 60s," *Social Text*, Nos. 9/10 (Summer 1984), 250.

radicals. C. Wright Mills died long before he had a chance to see the full evolution of the New Left: the invasion of SDS by PL, and the growing violent radicalism of the Weather Underground.

At the end of the 1960s, Bookchin filed into the burgeoning environmental movement, like many New Leftists searching for a new “ism” to champion after the conclusion of the Vietnam War. Social Ecology played an influential role in the development of the modern Green Movement. The Institute for Social Ecology, along with allied organizations like the Planet Drum Foundation, have shaped the political debate surrounding demands for the increased implementation of alternative forms of energy, reduction and restriction of carbon dioxide emissions, anti-globalism, and the implementation of a bioregional approach to economic development.<sup>372</sup> The growth of the No Global Movement in the early 2000s only heightened the influence of Social Ecology and decentralist political alternatives like Post-Scarcity Anarchism. In particular, Naomi Klein, a Canadian author and social democrat from Montreal, Quebec, and her books *No Logo* (2000), *Fences and Windows* (2002), and *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), have restated the basic tenets of Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism for a new generation of activists. An evaluation of Bookchin’s work and contributions further complicates the history of the development of the modern American Green Movement and the anti-globalization movement that has emerged in both Europe and North America. Bookchin provides a quantifiable link between the 1930s, the 1960s, and rise of American Environmentalism.

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<sup>372</sup> A bioregional approach to economic development accepts one of the basic assertions of Social Ecology that a human community is fundamentally a part of a total ecosystem. It stresses that every ecosystem is comprised of a unique and complex web of animal and plant species. Every human settlement must employ energy and economic strategies that are tailored to the specific requirements of living within an ecosystem without disrupting its natural health.

Ironically, Bookchin renounced his ties to the Anarchist movement in the mid-1990s, on the eve of an explosion in the Anti-Globalization effort's popularity fueled by the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995, and later by the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States and a coalition of its NATO allies. These events have produced a number of thinkers with outlooks sympathetic to Bookchin's ideas, of which Naomi Klein is only the most notable example. Bookchin's untimely break with anarchism has contributed to the continued obscurity of Social Ecology's founder. Nearly thirty years after the publication of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, a wider sympathetic audience finally materialized, but by that time Bookchin had lost interest in harnessing it.

On the one hand, the story of Bookchin's life and work presents yet another data set that confirms the thesis of Richard Hofstadter's classic *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948). Hofstadter argued that the differences between the political right and left in the United States have always been miniscule. Furthermore, he held that a majority of Americans "have accepted the economic virtues of a capitalist culture as necessary qualities of man."<sup>373</sup> As a result, Hofstadter observed, the extremes of left and right wing radicalism have never gained any traction in the United States. Beyond that, Allen J. Matusow's observations of the New Left, from *The Unraveling of America: A History of American Liberalism in the 1960s* (1984), can be applied with equal weight to Murray Bookchin. Participatory democracy proved to be impossible to live out for SDS. How could an organization demand sweeping social reform and yet deny the necessity of a strong central government to implement such changes? Social Ecology and Post-Scarcity Anarchism suffered from the same practical quandary.

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<sup>373</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 339.

On the other hand, Murray Bookchin did much to isolate himself on the fringe of American political culture. Engaged perpetually in a process of reshaping and rethinking his own politics, Bookchin cut ties with former allies as quickly as he forged new relationships. By the time the No Global Movement produced a large and potentially sympathetic audience for Bookchin, he had no interest in reaching that audience because he had moved on ideologically. By the 1990s, and perhaps even in the 1980s, Bookchin was no longer the same writer and thinker that he had been in the 1950s and the 1960s.

Peter Staudenmaier, a student of Bookchin's at the Institute for Social Ecology provided some valuable insight on Bookchin's personality. Much of Bookchin's intellectual energy was spent maintaining distance from his contemporaries. Bookchin was often the most harshly critical of thinkers whose work seemed close or compatible with his own.<sup>374</sup> In the 1970s Bookchin became intensely critical of Herbert Marcuse, accusing the Frankfurt School of applying Marxism to bourgeois sociology.<sup>375</sup> A curious change of heart for Bookchin, who ardently defended Marcuse from PL's derogatory slogan, "Marcuse: Copout or Cop," in "Listen! Marxist!".<sup>376</sup> This change is merely emblematic of Bookchin's desire to constantly evolve and reformulate his outlook to fit new circumstances. When Bookchin renounced anarchism in the 1990s, this act was merely the final change of heart for a thinker who had spent a lifetime renouncing old ideologies and grasping for new ones. In part, Bookchin's constant evolution emanated from a desire to never stagnate and become dogmatic in his world view. Yet, on the other hand, the constant series of ideological transformations that marked Bookchin's career stemmed from a personal ambition to remain unique.

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<sup>374</sup> Peter Staudenmaier: email to author, January 30, 2011.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, 178.

